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HOLD FAST OR LET GO





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*History*

# HOLD FAST OR LET GO

IN DEFENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

BY

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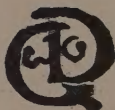
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## INTRODUCTION

IN dealing with the recent attacks on Christianity it may be well at the outset to explain why present times and circumstances seem to call for a special defence.

My appeal is especially to the working class. I have been interested for a considerable time in the Labour or Socialist movement in this country, and I have been conscious of a certain change in its atmosphere during the last few years. An attempt has been made to graft upon it an anti-Christian bias, and that not without some degree of success. From the point of view of mere policy, this is folly. Socialism is, in its essence, neither religious nor anti-religious, but primarily political and economic. To give the movement an anti-Christian flavour is not only to make the position of the many thousands of Christians within the movement difficult, but to repel a large section of our population outside who might be otherwise attracted. In the interest, therefore, of the movement itself, it ought to be made clear

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that there is a large body of collectivist opinion which adheres to Christianity.

Now I turn, for one moment, to my own position. Why do I, in particular, presume to state the case for Christianity? I know that I am a most unworthy representative of my cause, but I have come forward for two reasons.

Firstly, I may say, with all due modesty, that my past record in labour questions entitles me to ask from working men a fair hearing. If, then, for one reason or another, working men refuse to hear the clergy or others specially trained in these religious questions, they will perhaps hear me, and not only hear me but give fair and deliberate consideration to what I say.

And, secondly, I come forward because I have come into the most intimate contact with scepticism. I myself have been an opponent of Christianity. I know the difficulties. I know the objections.

At the same time I labour under certain disadvantages. To begin with, mine is the more difficult task of defence. It is always easy to be brilliant and witty in attacking other people's religion; one is necessarily more commonplace and more serious in defending one's own. Moreover mark this further, even greater disadvantage. My primary work is not to show

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how I came to believe, not to state why you should accept Christianity, but to show you that current objections will not hold water. But this is a rather unsatisfactory state in which to leave the subject. All these objections might be false, yet it would not necessarily follow that Christianity is true. And I cannot by mere dialectic convince my readers that it is true. The proof of the pudding is in the eating of it. If you want to know the truth of Christianity you must try it for yourselves. I propose, however, in my concluding chapter to attempt a somewhat more constructive work, and to state why I think that the claims of Christianity on man's reason and conscience are valid claims.

Then, again, I shall not be strikingly original. I shall, where desirable, strengthen my position with the arguments of others. Further, I have written and spoken on this subject already, and I should be seriously cramped if I were not to use the same contentions as at other times and places.

One other word of explanation. This work took its origin in a course of lectures delivered in Aberdeen in 1906, and it has been thought advisable to retain to some extent the spoken style. This must be my apology for the frequent use of the first and second personal pronouns.



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# HOLD FAST OR LET GO

## CHAPTER I

### IS MAN A MERE MACHINE?

BEFORE I deal with the objections adduced against Christianity in particular, a moral question which lies at the root of much scepticism has to be dealt with. The ancient fool said in his heart, "There is no God." The modern fool says in his heart, "There is no sin." There is a tendency among some of our writers of to-day not merely to whittle away the idea of responsibility, but to endeavour to stamp it out altogether. Theirs is the theory of Determinism, which denies all freedom of the will, and by consequence all responsibility, all sin. There have been, of course, determinist philosophers in the past, but it has been reserved for our own times to produce writers who should popularize this theory, and instead, like their predecessors, of trying to evade its practical

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consequences, should drive them home with remorseless and light-hearted vigour, fondly imagining that thus they pave the way for social reform. As in my view, Christianity is based on man's being a responsible creature, capable of a choice between right and wrong, this moral question faces us at the very beginning of our subject and must have prior treatment.

This, then, is our first heading. Has man any degree of freedom and therefore of responsibility, or is he a mere machine?<sup>1</sup>

Let us first state both sides of the question as clearly as possible, and thereafter discuss the pros and cons.

The determinist maintains that every man born into the world has certain irresistible tendencies which he groups under the headings of heredity, *i. e.* the tendencies derived from his

<sup>1</sup> In view of some foolish criticisms on this way of putting the question, a word of explanation may be desirable. I have been accused of unfairness to the determinist by attributing to him the view that man is a mere machine. Be it known, then, to all who may require the explanation, that I do not accuse the determinist of regarding man as a non-thinking machine. By the expression "a mere machine," I do not imply that he is to be regarded as destitute of consciousness, emotion, happiness, or pain, but simply that his actions are mechanical in the sense of being without free choice or responsibility.

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ancestors, and environment, *i.e.* the tendencies derived from his surroundings. Every act, whether right or wrong or indifferent, is predetermined by these tendencies. He has under no circumstances any power of choice, any freedom. He is the absolute bonds slave of the influences that play on his mind. It follows from this that no one can be blamed for his actions. How can a man be blamed for what he cannot help? It follows that no man can deserve honour for his actions. How can a man be honoured for what he cannot help? It follows that none of us need feel ashamed of anything we do. Why should we feel ashamed of what is not our fault? It follows that there is no such thing as right and wrong in the sense of things to be approved or disapproved. It follows that man is not a responsible agent, but a machine. It follows, in a word, that there is no such thing as moral responsibility.

Now that is the determinist's position; it is easily understood. But what is his opponent's position? The former seems constantly to misrepresent or misunderstand it.

We say that man is a free agent, but we do not mean that he is absolutely free. We do not say that you can sit down in a tub and lift yourself up in it. We recognize that heredity and

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environment are most important in determining a man's action, but we also say that a man has a certain residuum of initiative power which enables him, if the environment be not too powerful, to decide for himself which of two courses he shall adopt. In some environments a particular action may be very difficult, in others very easy, in some cases it may be impossible. It is easy to do right in good environments, it is difficult to do right in bad environments, it is sometimes impossible to do a particular right action ; but then, in this case, where there is no power of choice, the moral quality of right and wrong vanishes. No action can be called right or wrong in the moral sense, unless the agent had the power of choice.

Take an illustration : I see a fellow-creature drowning in a river, and I plunge in to save him. The current may be (1) safe and in my favour. In this case it is easy to do right. Or (2) it may be dangerous and against me. In this case I have still the power of choice. It is more difficult to do right, and I have it in my power to play the coward and swim back to the bank. Or (3) it may be fatal—powerfully against me, so that I cannot reach the drowning man. Here, as there is no choice, there is no question of moral right or wrong. Do not mis-

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understand me. There are other circumstances besides the current which affect the issue, such as my natural character, etc. I am not using an argument but an illustration, which I have represented as simpler than it really is, in order to make my meaning clear.

It may not be possible for the slum child to be good in the sense in which some more favoured person is good. But, still, even he has a certain residuum of freedom, he has the power of being more bad or less bad. And for him, in his circumstances, to be less bad is to be good.

We do not say that man can act in the absence of a motive. But we say he has the spontaneous power of weighting one motive, so as to make it more powerful than the others. In the face of adverse circumstances which are not absolutely irresistible, he has a certain power of choice.

We say that a man can choose whether he will have eggs or kidney for breakfast, if they are both on the table, but not if there is nothing but porridge there, and he has no money to buy anything else. The determinist says that in both cases he has the same power—namely none at all. According to him it is just as easy for the man who has only porridge before him to

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choose eggs as it is for the man with both eggs and kidney to make any free choice for himself.

Oh, but, you may say, you are conceding the importance of environment, in order to steal a march on your opponent. No such thing. I have always emphasized the importance of environment in determining action. Let me quote words written by me, long ago, before the question of determinism had acquired its present interest in the minds of working men.

“Unless the absolutely imperative needs of their bodily organization be fairly satisfied, we cannot expect from the majority of men their highest spiritual development. . . . Let us go into the dirty slums of our large cities where men, women, and children are herded together like beasts—let us note the degraded specimens of human nature that appear there, the drunkards’ faces, the withered features of little children, the shameless stare and laugh of the woman who has lost her womanhood, and then let us consider well what kind of morality, what kind of devotion, what kind of Christianity we can expect from such materials as these. . . . I do not deny that even in this lowest sink of life God has not left Himself altogether without witnesses. Even there, we can ever and anon catch a glimpse of self-sacrificing

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devotion, of maidenly purity, of tender human affection. Even into the close, hot hell that man has made for his brother come occasional breaths of sweet and pure air from God's distant paradise. But these are exceptions. We cannot plunge average human nature into a bath of pitch without defiling it."<sup>1</sup>

But, you may urge, that is your private opinion. It is not what Christianity teaches. Oh, but is it not? When have you heard Christians pooh-pooh environment? Let us go to the fountain-head, to the divine Founder of Christianity Himself. What does He say about environment and its influence on character? "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." Are these the words of one who minimized the importance of good environment? And if He were among us in bodily presence now, He would similarly say in our altered industrial conditions, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a slum-dweller to enter into the kingdom of God." The principle is essentially the same in both cases, viz. the importance of maintaining environment which is physically and morally

<sup>1</sup> Article on "The Labour Movement" in *Laily in Council*, pp. 256-8 (Wells Gardner, Darton & Co.).

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healthy. Do not, then, foist upon Christianity a position which does not belong to it. All that the advocates of free-will maintain is, that man has a certain residuum of free-will which makes him a moral being and not a machine.

Now, of course, all this is not argument. I have merely been stating the positions on each side, so that we may have our minds clear as to the issue, when we come to argue it.

Much popular discussion has recently taken place on this question. It is largely a matter of dogmatic assertion on both sides. The combatants never seem to get at each other. They beat the air. It is like two boys quarrelling in the street. The conversation runs thus, "You're a liar," "And you're another," and so on till they come to blows.

Let us not argue in this way. Let us consider quietly and dispassionately what we have to prove.

Notice first, it is of no use to enlarge on the evidences of the influence of environment in the determination of a man's action, because, as we have seen, that is admitted on both sides. The question is, whether or not the mind is conscious of an individual effort in virtue of which it may be capable of acting in opposition to what appears the strongest motive. Now we



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can only decide whether or not this occurs by scrutinizing closely what takes place when we make a choice. Are we ever conscious of an individual effort, conscious of making a more or less free selection by our own spontaneous power? Now we cannot see into other people's minds, and hence we must watch the operation of our own mind in order to ascertain the actual fact.

Now you see, do you not, why it is so difficult to reason about this question? We are like people sitting round a table and each looking through a microscope at similar specimens. We are to suppose it is not in the game for any one to look through another's microscope.

"I see so and so in this specimen," one man calls out.

"I don't see it here," replies another.

"But," says the first, "it is here all the same."

"I am convinced it is not."

"Excuse me, but I can see it."

"I can see it is absent."

"Am I a liar, then?"

"It looks remarkably like it." And so on.

The determinist looks through a microscope at his own mind and says, "I am conscious of no free action." The advocate of free-will looks through his microscope and exclaims, "I

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clearly discern a freedom of the will." And so an exchange of compliments passes between them.

We take another illustration: I can distinguish a red light from a green. But a great many persons see no difference between red and green, or they fail to distinguish them when they are put before them. Now, if one man says a thing is red and another that it is green, who is to decide? A has as much right to his opinion as B. They may argue about it till they are not red or green, but blue in the face; that will not clear the matter up. It will again end in an exchange of compliments. Free-will is an ultimate fact of consciousness, like the recognition of colour. We can determine the matter for ourselves by observation, but not by reasoning.

Must the matter, then, be left in this state of indecision? By no means. In the first place the colour-blind man is not consistent with himself, but the man of normal vision is. If you mix up a number of colours and test their vision, you will find the colour-blind man calls one particular colour sometimes red and sometimes green, but the normal man always sticks to the same colour designation for the same specimen. That is one point. Another is, that

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the consensus of human opinion is, by an overwhelming majority, in favour of normal vision. The vast majority will say that the last man is right.

Well, let us apply these tests to the question at issue. We make the charge against the determinist (*i.e.* he who says that man is a mere machine) that he never acts or even speaks as if he believed his own theory. Like other people he feels shame and remorse, indignation and resentment, although all these are, on his theory, utterly irrational feelings, seeing that neither he nor any one else could have acted otherwise than as they did. In spite of his protestations he is constantly slipping back into the familiar terms of responsibility and so on. The same remark applies to other philosophers who deny other facts of consciousness. Some hold, for example, that there is no evidence that anybody exists but themselves. But they talk and act as if they did believe it. As Martineau puts it, "The theory of these philosophers is refuted by their vocabulary."

Let me give you illustrations of this inconsistency from two sources—firstly, from the popular journalist Mr. Robert Blatchford, who has written much on this subject, and secondly, from the eminent scientist, the late Professor Huxley.

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Speaking of fierce temptations to evil, Mr. Blatchford says—

“Who amongst us has not fought with wild beasts, not at Ephesus, but in his own heart?”

This, of course, is only intelligible on the hypothesis of free-will, because who are “we” that are to fight? On determinist principles the wild beasts must fight it out among themselves. We have only to register the victory of the strongest. We have no fighting power, no possibility of affecting the issue.

Again he speaks of “all the mighty dead and the noble works they have bequeathed to us.” Why noble? We don’t call a locomotive engine noble because it does its work without breaking down. We call that signalman noble who rushes in front of an express to save a little child; but Mr. Blatchford has no right to call him noble, because on his hypothesis he could not help himself.

Huxley recognizes that Determinism, which he calls Necessarianism, “would drown man’s soul, paralyze his energies, and destroy the beauty of his life.” And this is how he gets out of it. Referring to Determinism—“Truly it is a most gratuitously invented bugbear. I suppose, if there be a physical necessity, it is that a stone unsupported must fall to the

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ground. But what is all we know and really can know about this phenomenon? Simply, that in all human experience stones have fallen to the ground under these conditions, that we have not the smallest reason for believing that any stone so circumstanced will not fall to the ground, and that we have, on the contrary, every reason to believe that it will so fall. But when, as commonly happens, we change will into must, we introduce an idea of necessity which has no warranty that I can discover anywhere. Force I know and law I know, but what is this necessity but an empty shadow of my own mind's thinking?" In other words, it is a question between saying that a man will certainly do a thing and saying that he must. Could hair-splitting go further? In the face of "will certainly" Huxley stands erect, dignified, moral. But confronted with a "must" his soul is drowned, his energies paralyzed, etc.

As Mr. Mallock well puts it, "If some one had held a loaded pistol to Professor Huxley's ear and had offered to pull the trigger, the professor would hardly have been reconciled to the threatened pull being given by reflecting that, though his death would, as a matter of fact, result from it, it would not be accurate for a philosopher to say that it must."

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We see, then, that on the test of consistency, determinism breaks down as the colour-blind person's view of colour breaks down. The determinist's thoughts, acts, but especially his words, belie his theory.

Now let us apply the second test, which we said consisted of an appeal to the general opinion of others. The man with normal vision, you remember we said, must be right when he says there is a difference between red and green because his view is confirmed by nearly all others. Of course, it is not meant that the opinion of the majority is in any sense a valid test of truth, but merely that on any question concerning the ultimate facts of consciousness, such as colour-vision, or the sense of moral freedom and responsibility, the general view of the normal man is of the highest consequence.

In this case of free-will we may appeal on the one hand to the experts, who by special training and study are fitted to judge of mental processes, or on the other to the common sense of mankind in general.

Let us take the experts first.

It has been claimed that most "men of science" are in favour of determinism. But what is meant by "men of science"? The experts are the men who deal with this particular

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science, viz. the science of Psychology—the study of mental processes. But by “men of science” our opponents always mean men of physical science. It is as if they appealed to botanists on a question of electrical engineering, or to veterinary surgeons on a question of building construction. It is not true, to begin with, that most physicists are determinists. It may have been so a generation ago, when our ideas of science were cruder, but it is not so now. You may take that from me, and I know a little about science. The physical scientists of to-day have largely abandoned the materialism of yesterday. The mere fact that he has Sir Oliver Lodge and Lord Kelvin, and I will add Professor Arthur Thomson, against him might give the determinist pause. And this is still more true of the experts in mind. Determinism is practically crushed out in the psychology of to-day. I do not know of a living psychologist of the first rank who holds determinism in its crude form.

But, after all, special training in mental studies is not absolutely necessary to determine an ultimate fact of consciousness such as free-will any more than it is necessary to determine whether there is a difference between red and green. I lay much more emphasis on the general common sense of mankind. In ordinary

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life we always assume that man has some degree of freedom and responsibility. The exception—he who holds the determinist view that man is a mere machine—belongs to one of two categories. Either he is a specialist who has muddled his head with metaphysics, or else he has some theory of men and things which he thinks will be aided by determinism. The socialist determinist belongs to the latter category. Nobody can doubt but that he has been led to determinism by a desire to back up his view of the importance of material environment on character. But I have already shown you that it is possible for one who holds the strongest view in favour of free-will to fully recognize the supreme importance of environment in the interest of morals.

Now am I too dogmatic in saying that the common sense of mankind is with me in this matter? You may think I should require a great mass of evidence to prove this. But it will be quite sufficient if I put Mr. Robert Blatchford into the witness-box.

Thus he says—

“To begin with, the average man will be against me.”

Quite so. That is just what a colour-blind man would have to say.



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And again—

“Universal experience has misled us in the matter of human responsibility.”

I may perhaps be forgiven if I say that I am content, even with Mr. Blatchford against me, if universal experience is admitted to be on my side.

Now do not misunderstand me. If this were a question of technical knowledge or elaborate reasoning, such as is involved, for example, in the theory of Evolution, or the undulatory theory of Light, or even such a question of evidence as is usually submitted to a jury, I should say that the common sense of mankind is no criterion at all. But it is a question of simple perception like that of colour, and here common sense must decide, or at least it has an enormous presumption in its favour. If a man tell me I have a smut on my face, I do not enter into an elaborate argument. I look in a mirror to see if he is right. You tell me I am a mere machine. I look in my own mind and see it is not so.

It has been suggested by one of my critics that the method of introspection—of observing the action of our own mind—is a flimsy method. Anything more absurd and unphilosophic than such an argument cannot be conceived. In the

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ultimate analysis it is only our own minds that we can observe. We can gain no knowledge of anything except by scrutinizing the phenomena of personal consciousness. If I have built insecurely in appealing, on the question of free-will, to personal consciousness, I have at least built on that foundation on which all our knowledge of the external world and the existence of other people is based. Question the reliability or reality of your own mental states, and the whole fabric of knowledge tumbles to pieces like a house of cards. Act as if you disbelieved the reliability and reality of these, and you are within sight of the lunatic asylum.

I may remark in passing that the popular illustrations used to buttress determinism seem to me to be of a very absurd character. Of all these the most inept I have met is the comparison of life to a game of whist—"A man can only play the cards he has." True, but an effort of the will to give attention to the game and to play a particular card at the right time—are not these essential? If a man do not of his own free-will exercise this power, he will be very apt to revoke or to trump his partner's trick. In such a case his partner, if he is at all human, may use strong language, and will not accept the excuse that "a man can only play the cards

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he has," or that he is not a free agent and therefore not responsible. This latter excuse will raise a laugh all round the table as if it were a joke. This is always how determinism is treated when it is gravely stated in ordinary life. The partner's conduct is a clear illustration of my point that determinism is inconsistent with human nature. The determinist ought rather to use an illustration from bridge. He should say that life is like playing dummy at bridge. Here the player puts his cards face upwards on the table and has no choice as to the order in which he plays them. He can only play them as he is told. In such a case manifestly he has no choice and no responsibility attaches to him. A player, in such a case, may, if he is not interested in the game, take up a newspaper till dummy falls to the next man, and nobody will be a whit the worse. This is the determinist position. He might logically tell us to take up a newspaper and let things slide. Why should we try to do right if we can only play the cards as we are told? This logical conclusion involves, by its absurdity, the refutation of its premises.

There are some other points in connection with determinism to be considered, but these I must reserve for succeeding chapters. Mean-

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time it only remains to summarize what has been already said. In stating the case for free-will I have particularly cautioned you against supposing that will is absolutely free. We only contend that, while heredity and environment are of the utmost importance, we yet do possess a certain residuum of personal initiative to which we apply the term free-will. I have shown you that the question is one of simple perception, of looking into your own minds and noting what you see there. Determinists take one view, we take another. We claim that the following circumstances bear us out. The determinist never acts or speaks as if he believed his own theory. The opinion of mental experts is, on the whole, against him. Finally, to the common sense of mankind, the notions of responsibility, of shame, of moral approval, and so on, are as real and universal as the primary instincts of hunger and fear, and therefore the common sense of mankind must be taken as absolutely against determinism.

In thus resting our case on the elementary facts of human nature, we are surely taking the strongest possible ground. And determinism will not work out in practice. As Gilbert Chesterton well puts it, "Christianity, being an historical and practical thing, has always at the

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back of its mind the eternal and normal dangers. . . . She is keenly conscious of the dismal procession of blackguards, age after age, who forge signatures and say it is destiny, and seduce women and say it is nature. She knows the common talk of life in which 'my artistic temperament inherited from my mother' means five-pound notes not returned, and 'my environment in the wild, rude west' means umbrellas missing from the hall. In short, Christianity, being historic, has a memory for actual things; and she sees Determinism not printed in a book the theoretic philosophy of Agnostics, but written across the face of history the practical religion of cowards."

We say, then, that Determinism plays havoc with human nature. It destroys the sense of responsibility, and with it all those noble emotions of moral aspiration, blame at the guilt of others and shame at our own misdeeds. It kills all that is beautiful in heroism and all that is sweet in friendship. Persuade yourselves that you are mere machines, and you paralyze human effort and debase human life; you take the soul from poetry, emasculate art, amputate from humanity all its dignity, all its glory. I do most earnestly believe that under such a theory, were it universally adopted—as

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happily it cannot be, for nature is too strong for it—a discrowned and disjointed humanity would inevitably crumble into a general disaster of physical and moral decay.

“Felt within us as ourselves, the powers of good, the powers of ill,

Strewing balm or shedding poison in the fountains of the will.

Follow you the star that lights a desert pathway, yours or mine,

Forward till you see the Highest Human Nature is Divine.

Follow light and do the right, for man can half control his doom,

Till you find the deathless angel seated in the vacant tomb.”

## CHAPTER II

### HUMAN PUNISHMENTS

WE have, on scientific and practical grounds, rejected determinism. But it has been attempted to make this theory a starting-point for Social Reform, especially as regards human punishments. Let us first, then, consider the relation of determinism to human punishments.

The Socialist determinist says that our modern system of dealing with criminals is a mistake. Our gaols and our scaffolds do not reclaim criminals. The whole system is ill-contrived and mismanaged. And I am inclined, with my knowledge of the subject, which I admit is very limited, largely to agree with him. I think, with him, that we should aim at giving the criminal such an environment as will wean him from crime. So far we are at one.

But observe the bearing of determinism on all this. My opponents seem to think that a general acceptance of determinism would lead to more

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sensible and humane methods. But I don't think so at all. If our laws were devised merely to give satisfaction to our vindictive feelings against criminals because we despise and dislike them, that might be so. But that is certainly not the idea of our modern system of penalties. Their object, as it would be stated by all legislators, is twofold—(1) to protect society from the criminal, and (2) to reclaim the criminal from the error of his ways. This may be attempted in a blundering way, but these are certainly the objects of these penalties. Now a determinist society might, probably would, be in favour of more drastic and inhumane methods. The criminal's heredity may be so bad and the change required in his environment so radical that it might be better to kill him outright. For, remember, the case of the habitual criminal is, if anything, more hopeless from the determinist than from the free-will point of view. A determinist might well argue, "Let us hang a man for sheep-stealing because, first, this will effectively protect society from his depredations ; and, secondly, the cost and trouble of altering his environment are so great, and its success in his individual case so problematical, as to make the attempt not worth the while. Let us kill him, and so set our energies free for the reclamation



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of those who are less hopeless than he. Man is a mere machine ; if his mechanism is hopelessly out of order, the best plan may be to break him up and sell him for old iron."

That brilliant and versatile writer H. G. Wells, in his book entitled *Anticipations*, arguing from the determinist point of view, advocates a less squeamish regard for human life and an extension of capital punishment. And on his own principles there is much to be said for this. Take the question of the unemployed, for instance. How it would simplify matters if we could first of all kill out all those whom the present system of irregular employment has made shiftless, idle, worthless. From the determinist point of view these men are past redemption. They spoil and vitiate every well-meant attempt to deal with the general and less hopeless mass of unemployed. Let us, then, the determinist socialist might well say, kill all the wasters and then there will be some chance for the rest. Or take the Temperance Question. Why should we not put down intemperance by enacting a law that every one found drunk should be shot? If the ancient Romans had had to deal with a vast curse like this, that is just the sort of remedy they would have attempted. And if carried out it would be effective. I

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challenge any one to give on materialist and determinist grounds a logical reason against such a policy. The only ground is our belief in the sanctity of human life, and that we derive from Christianity.

I think it, therefore, quite a mistake to suppose that determinism would necessarily or probably lead to more rational and humane methods of dealing with criminals.

## CHAPTER III

### DIVINE PUNISHMENTS

IN turning next to the subject of Divine punishment, I want, at the outset, to caution you against a mistaken notion of what the purpose and nature of such punishment is. It is not a vindictive retribution inflicted upon man to pay him out for the wrong he has done. God's punishments are of two kinds—first, temporal, and secondly, final punishments. Temporal punishment inflicted upon us, for instance, in this life, is purely reclamatory. It acts [chiefly by law. The wages of sin is not merely death, but pain, loss, disappointment, disillusionment. The drunkard wakes up with a headache in the morning, and if he persists in his evil courses he ruins health and happiness. These punishments are environments intended to help his weak will to resist.

Final punishment, on the other hand, is not reclamatory ; it is only in a restricted sense that it can be called punishment at all. It is, in its

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essence, simply the perverted nature of the sinner, perverted by his own free-will, exercising its prerogative of final and persistent opposition to the Divine Will. In this lies the awfulness of sin, that perseverance in it is itself ruin, misery, remorse, the worm that dieth not. Thus the persistent sinner simply makes hell in his own soul. He does not require God to do it for him. Hell is not, except in a figurative sense, a lake that burns with fire and brimstone. It is simply one aspect of sin. Sin understood in the fullness of knowledge, read in the light of eternity, itself is hell. It passes the power even of Omnipotence to forcibly convert the soul which of its own free-will sets itself persistently and defiantly against Him. In case of such a forcible conversion, were it possible, the ecstasy of self-surrender, of willing obedience which is itself the joy of heaven, would be wanting. Final punishment, then, is, in a sense, not punishment at all. It is merely the sinful condition of alienation from God, in whose beatific vision the soul of man finds its goal and its satisfaction. I once heard a Salvation Army girl say, "There is no need for any of you to tell me there is no hell, for I have had a very good taste of it myself." That was sound philosophy. She recognized that the state of mind

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she produced in her own heart by sin was itself hell.

Of course you may say I am dogmatizing. Well, but if you are to attack my religion you must allow me, please, to state it in my own way.

That is preliminary. I now proceed to consider the argument of the determinist that Divine punishment is unjust.

His argument may be stated in this way :—

God made man. God is therefore responsible for man's characteristics. Therefore God is responsible for sin. Therefore it is unjust of God to punish man for sin.

In other words, I am the creature of my heredity and environment. I did not make my heredity and environment, therefore I cannot be held responsible for them or their results.

The statement of this difficulty is, of course, nothing new or modern. It is at least as old as St. Augustine. That writer says, "Since we all of us believe that God is the Cause and Creator of every living thing, but that nevertheless He is not the author of sin, it is hard to explain reasonably how it can come about that, sins being committed by souls and souls being created by God, these sins are not solely attributed to God, who must be their first originator."

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Now, on determinist principles, this argument is perfectly sound. In fact, it is just another way of stating the determinist position. If I am a mere machine I cannot be responsible for anything. My Maker, if any one, is responsible.

But the determinist must not be allowed to foist this conclusion on us who believe in free-will. If God were making a machine or a bridge or even a plant, He would be responsible for their behaviour, but when He makes a rational being in His own image, *i.e.* gifted with His own divine attribute of freedom and responsibility, then this God-like being shares in God's responsibility; he has within limits the choice of his own acts, and for them he is answerable. Only so far as he has freedom is he responsible, but so far he is responsible.

The determinist argument may be otherwise put in this form. God is the First Cause of all that exists, and since sin exists God as its Cause must be responsible for it.

But we may presume to answer that man, in so far as he is free, is himself of the nature of a First Cause. We are here indeed in very deep water. We are dealing with abstractions which it almost eludes the human mind to conceive. Even those best trained in psychology have difficulty in keeping their thoughts quite

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clear when they launch into this region which is on the borderland of the inconceivable and unknowable. I think, however, that if man's will is free we are justified in regarding him as a creator, a first cause, or as Gilbert Chesterton puts it, "a little god." So far God has endowed him with His own divine attribute.

Perhaps you say that if God created free-will, which implies the potentiality of sin, God is responsible for sin. No, that is not so. God is responsible for the potentiality of sin, but not for the sin itself. Why? Because on our view of free-will, man, while he had the power to sin, was not obliged to sin, therefore man is responsible if he sin and praiseworthy if he do right.

The officer puts a sword into the soldier's hand and tells him how to use it against the enemy. If the soldier turn it on his comrade, that is murder ; but the soldier, not the officer, is primarily responsible.

But you may continue, "Surely, here is a great puzzle. God is responsible, is He, for the potentiality of sin? But why did He then permit sin to be possible at all? Why did He not create man incapable of sin?"

Well, I think the answer is evident enough. All the grandeur and dignity of life depend on

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our being moral creatures, not machines. But this could not be were sin impossible to us. There would then be no nobility, no beauty of character, because these imply free choice. If we could not transgress there would be no credit or praise due to the hero, no room for gratitude or reverence. Freedom, if it mean anything, implies the possibility of choosing either course.

In passing, let me make one further remark in connection with this question. The agnostic determinist always talks glibly about responsibility, denying its reality in man. He evidently understands perfectly what responsibility is. Now I want to know where he got this idea of responsibility at all.

"Oh," you may say, "he has got the idea from hearing those silly Christians talk." But that won't do. If what we talked of was totally outside his own experience, as colour to the blind man, we should be unintelligible to him.

He professes not to have got the idea from his own nature, because, on his theory, there is no responsibility in man. He didn't get it from lower or from inanimate nature, because it is agreed on all hands that there is no responsibility there. He talks about God being responsible, but he can't have got it from a



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knowledge of God, because, on his own showing, there is no God, or if there is, He is unknowable. Here we have the extraordinary phenomenon of Nature having gifted our friend with a clear and definite conception of moral responsibility—a thing which exists nowhere, either in plant or animal, in God or man, in the heaven above or in the earth beneath. If a blind man showed that he knew perfectly what we meant by colour, I should suspect that he was not really blind. When I hear the determinist showing a clear appreciation of what we mean by moral responsibility, I know he can only have found the concept by observing his own mind—that there is a sense of moral responsibility and freedom there, although he refuses to admit it.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE NATURE OF CONSCIENCE

I PASS now to the last subject I have to consider in connection with morals proper, viz. the nature of Conscience.

It has been said, strangely enough, by a modern writer, that Christianity knows nothing of a natural conscience in man. "Our Churches," he says, "attribute the origin of morals to the Bible." And again, "When I was a boy I was taught that acts were right or wrong as they were pleasing or displeasing to the God of the Hebrew Bible." Well, he must have been remarkably badly taught, then. And the strangest thing is that he appears to have believed it. For many years he supposed that nobody would have had a notion of right or wrong, unless they had got it from the Bible. Neither Plato nor Socrates, neither Cicero nor Seneca, neither Confucius nor Buddha, had an idea of what virtue and vice mean. And it is silly nonsense of this kind that he presumes to

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attribute to us because, forsooth, he was once foolish enough to believe it.

Can he point to a single Christian philosopher or writer who, in discussing the nature of conscience, has not explicitly held that the natural man without any special revelation has this inward illumination which guides him to distinguish right from wrong, just as reason guides him to distinguish truth from falsehood?

And this, of course, as every tyro knows, is the teaching of the Bible itself. We are told of a Light that lighteth every man—not that cometh into the Church or that readeth his Bible, but—that cometh into the world. The same thought is explicitly stated by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. He points out that, though the Gentiles did not possess the written law of the Scriptures, they yet had the guidance of conscience in their hearts; they instinctively knew right from wrong. “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”

Now I have said that I am going to discuss

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the nature of conscience. It is this rather than the origin of conscience that chiefly concerns us.

Some people seem to think that if we consent to apply the principle of Evolution to Conscience, then in order to explain it we must examine it at its lowest terms, instead of at its highest development. They never make an attempt to look conscience, as it now exists, straight in the face, and to try to determine just what it does, what it says, what it means. That is the work that lies to our hand and is most important. Having done that satisfactorily, it might be of much interest and even of scientific utility to work backwards and trace it from its earliest beginning in the childhood of either the individual or the race.

You see, if Conscience is Divine, if it speaks with transcendental authority as it now exists, it is no less divine nor is it of less authority because it once existed in a rudimentary form. "The true nature of a thing," as Aristotle well remarks, "is whatever it becomes when the process of its development is complete." If you wanted to study my character, would you take me as I am, or would you take the ovum, the little speck of living matter, invisible to the naked eye, which is all there was of me a few years ago; put it under the microscope, and

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having studied its physical characters, propose to turn round to the world and tell it all about Dr. Beveridge? Yet in that microscopic germ, by a wonderful mystery, which has never yet been fully probed by science, there existed the potentiality of all that is good or evil in my propensities to-day.

Evolution always implies previous involution. The materialist may not, from the magic hat he calls evolution, produce, by some juggling, all sorts of wonderful objects, and yet maintain there was nothing in the hat to begin with. He may hand the empty hat round for our inspection, and forthwith, resuming possession of it, begin his magical production. He will still fail to convince us that he did not by some means get something into the hat before he began. The less can never produce the greater, the part cannot be greater than the whole. So all that is wonderful and immeasurable and divine in my nature must have been in the little drop of protoplasm from which I came. And if that is true of the evolution of the individual, it is equally true of the race. You think, says the materialist, that you are the child of God; come, and I will show you the slime of which you were made. But if instead of fifty or sixty years, as in the case of the individual, you

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make, in the case of the race, a more unlimited draft on the bank of time—if you count your development by millions of years—that still does not enable two and two to make five. It may be that all life is evolved from the thin green film which, in the distant days when our planet cooled to become habitable, first spread itself over the moist rock to greet the sunshine. Still if so, that film held in itself the potentiality of all it was to become. It was the germ of all our infinite variety of plant and animal life just as surely as the fertilized ovum is the germ of the individual. And as a germ it contained in it wonderful and mysterious possibilities which cannot be explained by any amount of juggling with time and environment.

Or would you go further back still? Would you tell me, though the evidence is lacking, that the organic is produced from the inorganic—the living, that is to say, from the non-living? Still you leave the argument untouched. If it is as you say, then I tell you that in the dim and distant time, when the earth was without form, and void, when first it shot forth a glowing mass from the womb of the Sun, it still was no magic hat, it possessed in its incandescent mass the possibilities of all the ages. That; or else the germ was later imported into it from a

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source more divine than itself. But let us leave the alternative out of account, as it might seem to savour of special creation. Let us suppose that life was developed direct from the non-living. Well, that simply means that we must now predicate of inorganic matter a property we had not hitherto detected, namely, the power of giving birth to living organisms. You do not, as you think, by such an hypothesis lower life or degrade the nature of man. Nay, you do but dignify the inorganic, saturating it with an indwelling power of potential life, enduing its nature, too, with haunting Deity, crowning it with an unsuspected glory.

As on the hillsides of Bethlehem the Angels sang their *Gloria in Excelsis*, hard by the lowly manger of that little Infant, now lying helpless in the arms of the Mother Maid, but presently to blossom forth and become the Saviour of the world, so we may well suppose that when life, with all its promise of variety, beauty, dignity, divinity, was first in its lowliest form uttered by the Eternal Thought, then, indeed, the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.

You see my point, do you not? In order to ascertain the real nature of Conscience we have to examine it at its highest development as it

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now is. For it is what it is, howsoever it may have become.

One other strange statement here demands our attention. It has been said that Conscience is no more mysterious than the stomach or the sense of smell—the evident implication being that these are not at all mysterious.

But let us see if there is no mystery, say, about the sense of smell. Can you tell me how a drop or two of lavender can give off odoriferous particles in such enormous quantities as, in half a minute, to fill a room of considerable size and yet lose practically none of its weight? Can you tell me how these odoriferous particles lighting upon the mucous membrane of my nose set up a molecular movement in the nerve endings there, which movement is transmitted in an instant of time to the grey matter of my brain, where further molecular movements follow? And, above all, can you explain how these molecular movements come to be accompanied by, and apparently to cause, a certain state of consciousness in my mind which I call smell, so that thus I am able to read off material vibrations in terms of mind? All this is mysterious enough, but it is characteristic of crudity in scientific matters to consider it all plain sailing. The scientist, knowing much,



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is conscious of mystery ; the ignorant man, the sciolist, knowing little, is conscious of no mystery at all. He is always shallow and cocksure.

But to our theme. Let us scrutinize the action of conscience in our own minds. In other words, let us try to analyze what happens when we make a moral judgment, that is to say, when we distinguish right from wrong.

The action of Conscience may be divided into two parts. We are not indeed entitled to say that there are two absolutely separate mental processes, but rather that for purposes of clearness we may regard it in two aspects. I call these its primary and its secondary actions. The first is a command as of a superior, the second is a passing of sentence like that of a judge.

Before Conscience can come into play at all it is necessary that at least two courses of conduct should present themselves for selection. A possibility of choice—this is absolutely necessary before Conscience can speak. We cannot call that action right or wrong which we cannot help.

The actions, then, and their attendant circumstances being before her, Conscience exercises her primary or imperative function of command,

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yea or nay, "thou shalt," or "thou shalt not." We apprehend at once that, while it is still open to us to take either course, a moral quality attaches to each course—it is right or it is wrong.

Observe that the judgment of Conscience is purely moral. It is not, for example, æsthetic or artistic—it is not a question of the beauty or ugliness of the action—an action may be beautiful or ugly, pleasing or displeasing, and yet cannot be the subject of pronouncement of Conscience, if the agent had no choice. When a mother in a fit of insanity kills her infant, we are revolted. Her action is a hideous one, yet it does not excite in us moral indignation. And the terrible regret of the mother when she recovers is not remorse.

Still less is the ground of our conscientious judgment prudential, *i. e.* dependent on securing pleasure or avoiding pain for ourselves. A man may resist a temptation because he fears punishment, either here or hereafter, but in such a case he is not acting on conscientious grounds. Conscience commands us to resist not for the sake of consequences, but because we know the action is unworthy of us; because we have a moral shrinking from it; *bêcause*, in short, it is wrong.

Observe further, that the judgment of Con-

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science is not absolute, it is relative to what we know of the whole circumstances of the case. She does not say, "This is absolutely right," but "This is better than that." She judges only on the evidence placed before her. It is the function of our observation and our reason to collect and marshal the evidence. Thus a man may do an action which we consider wrong, simply because his barbaric education or his innate stupidity make him take a wrong view of the circumstances. It is not that his Conscience misleads him, but that his reason is incapable of justly estimating all the circumstances of the case.

That is the answer to the argument that Conscience cannot be a divine voice because it seems not to be infallible. The fault lies not with Conscience, but with our view of the circumstances. The absolutely right answer to a question may be "yes," but if I have taken a wrong view of the facts the relatively right answer for me to give may be "no." It would be positively wrong of me to say "yes," even if "yes" were true, if I believed it to be untrue. As I have already put it, Conscience judges on the evidence laid before her. We can see that the poor Indian widow is wrong in immolating herself in the funeral pyre of her husband, but if

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the general system of the universe were as she with her imperfect knowledge supposes, then her action would be right.

There is another case in which Conscience may appear to be fallible. A man may persuade himself that he is acting on conscientious grounds, when really he is acting from prudential or selfish motives. But such a decision is not a moral decision, and does not depend on conscience.

Conscience, then, having given her decision, and been obeyed or disobeyed, proceeds to pass sentence. There is a resultant feeling of shame for our own wrong or blame for the wrong of others. If the action was right, in the case of others we feel approval ; in our own case we have a peculiar, pleasurable sensation for which we have no special name.

But note that, in passing sentence, Conscience takes extenuating circumstances into account and modifies the blame or approval accordingly. She especially considers the degree of freedom of action. All sins are free acts, else they could not be sins, but they are not all equally free. There is all the difference possible between wilful and perverse wrong-doing, and that committed where heredity and an immense weight of attendant circumstances combine to

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make right difficult. Thus when the street Arab commits a crime we do not blame him greatly, because, as we say, "he never had a chance." On the other hand, if he performs an act of heroism, he earns from us, in consideration of his unfavourable circumstances, a special meed of approval.

But the most important point for us to observe about the judgments of Conscience, is the peculiar personal element attaching to them. They come to us as if from some unknown external authority.

We see this if we compare the action of Conscience with that of such an instinct as hunger. The latter is an impersonal force driving us to take food. The feeling is one purely relative to ourselves. Conscience, on the other hand, does not seem like a blind force, but a personal command, borne in upon us with quite a unique and, at first sight, inexplicable authority. So in the secondary action of Conscience—its sentence of resultant pleasure or pain—the pleasure is a sense of approval from some one else, shame is the consciousness of moral nakedness before another eye. Hunger is a brute force within ourselves. Conscience seems to us almost like a companion talking to us in utterances of appeal or rebuke.

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We have, then, to consider the question—to whom are we to refer these commands? Who is this companion?

Different answers have been given. Some refer the external influence of Conscience to society. Certain courses of action in individuals, such as self-sacrifice, or abstinence from violence, or patriotism, are greatly in the interest of the community generally. Society, therefore, establishes a certain convention by which it sets the seal of its approval to these actions. It backs this sanction by a system of rewards and punishments. Being creatures of convention, we constantly act upon these judgments of society and apply this rule to our conduct. This is Conscience. It is resolved into conventionalism. We do right for the same reason that leads us to wear clothes, or to refrain from wiping our noses with our serviettes, viz. because social convention requires it.

Now, there are two arguments which compel us to put aside this explanation of the springs of Conscience.

If society were the source of the judgments of Conscience, these would fix upon and deal with the external action and results which follow. Convention judges only by what we do, not by

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what we mean. It condemns the act which is contrary to its conventional law, but it takes no cognizance of the hidden springs of motive from which such action takes its rise. And naturally so. Society cannot trace the action back to its source in the recesses of our mind, nor adjudicate upon motives about which it can only conjecture. All these weighings and hesitancies, all the mental processes that precede and give rise to action—these are beyond society's ken. But when Conscience adjudicates it is just with these hidden origins that she deals. It is the intention, the purpose, that make the act right or wrong. It is by these Conscience judges, not by results. As an eloquent ethical philosopher puts it, "The holy purpose, broken off by paralysis of limb or interrupted by sudden death, kindles our reverence as much as the highest triumphs of successful will." We see, then, that the judgments of Conscience are different in kind from the judgments of conventionality.

But, further, the highest moral judgments are made in defiance of conventional sanctions; moral pioneers are always men who dare to burst the bonds of narrow conventionalism. And instead of taking their pace from society, these give their lead to it, stirring its sluggish

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pulse, shaming its weakness and folly. These are the men of whom society—the world—was not worthy.

“They are slaves who will not choose  
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,  
Rather than in silence shrink  
From the truth they needs must think.  
They are slaves who dare not be  
In the right with two or three.”

It is evident, then, that society cannot be the source from which Conscience derives its authority.

Let us put another view. May not the authority be derived from the individual judgment of other men whose opinions we respect, the two or three with whom we dare to be in the right? Is our Conscience the reflection of the views of our own particular set who share our predilections, our preferences, our prejudices?

Now there is no doubt that we are greatly influenced by the individual judgments of other men. Often we have asked ourselves, when a moral issue had to be decided, “How would *he* think of it?”—having in view our own particular hero. There are men to whom you and I instinctively bow the knee, and in the magic of whose attraction we are taken willing captives. Their approval has quickened the moral pulse



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into a bounding and glad eagerness, and, in days of backsliding, the reflection from their faces has waked our hearts to a healthier shame. All this is very like Conscience, and especially like Conscience as the Christian understands it.

Shall we, then, resolve the authority of Conscience into the influence upon us of individual men whom we revere?

Nay, this cannot be. We revere them because we cannot but regard them as morally higher than ourselves. But what of their Conscience? Whence do they derive their sanctions? Where is their higher? We must look for some Highest of all to whom they as well as we, consciously or unconsciously, bow in reverence, an absolute Light "in whom is no darkness at all."

Moreover, there are times of moral crises when we dare to stand alone, when no better man gives us our cue, when to us the judgment is spoken despite all around. This is the highest morality of all, when society spurns us and those we love best turn away—"Whosoever loveth father or mother or brother or sister more than Me, he cannot be My disciple."

Where is this Personal Authority of Conscience, then, to be sought? It is not from the inorganic world, for there is neither knowledge nor sight. It is not from the lower organic world of plant

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and animal, for there is neither freedom nor responsibility. We have even rejected as its possible source the highest common judgment of our fellow-men.

“Where shall (this moral) wisdom be found?  
And where is the place of (this moral) understanding?  
Man knoweth not the price thereof,  
Neither is it found in the land of the living;  
The depth saith, It is not in me;  
And the sea saith, It is not with me.”

Nay, but are we not now within sight of our goal? Step by step we have pressed our way upward past all the hierarchy of created things, and now do not the mist and the cloud that had limited our vision clear away, revealing the divine Light serene upon the mountain top? There is no personal influence adequate to explain the authority of Conscience but the hypothesis of a Divine and Perfect Personality transcending humanity, and yet bearing to each human soul an intimate and a dear personal relationship.

“Closer is He than breathing; nearer than hands or feet.”

Now indeed we see that in the presence of Conscience we stand on holy ground. Surely it is of this divine and heavenly wisdom within

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us, this natural light of Conscience, that the writer of the Book of Wisdom speaks when he says :—

“Wisdom is the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty ; therefore can no defiled thing fall into her. For she is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God and the image of His goodness. And being but one she can do all things, and remaining in herself she maketh all things new ; and in all ages entering into holy souls she maketh them friends of God and prophets. For God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom. For she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of stars : being compared with the light she is found before it.”

## CHAPTER V

### RESPONSIBILITY FOR BELIEF

IN previous chapters we have dealt with Determinism and certain other ethical subjects relative to it. We now pass from purely moral to more distinctly religious difficulties. But there is one subject which forms a kind of transition between them, viz. the question of responsibility for religious belief.

An attempt is sometimes made to discount the Christian apologist on the ground that he represents the conventional view, while his opponent stands for progress, for advanced thought. In such a case the opponent of Christianity will make it his boast that he is an infidel, a heretic, or whatever you call the man who differs from the general opinion. I recognize that dissentients of this kind have sometimes in their day and generation been pioneers of thought. But I demur to the view that, because of his being in this position, he is any more worthy of attention. Copernicus and

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Galileo and Bruno were no doubt regarded by their contemporaries as heretics. But so are the Anarchists, and the Peculiar People, and the Christian Scientists, and the man who maintains the earth is flat, and Mr. Theodore Napier. No, the mere fact that a man is peculiar in his views is no guarantee of greatness or even indeed of sanity—any more than it is of folly. The question is, Does the man speak the truth or does he not? If he doesn't speak the truth, it doesn't matter to me that he can command the suffrages of all the silly. And if he doesn't speak the truth it doesn't matter to me how peculiar his views may be. That itself is no recommendation. Nay, let us leave all these extraneous matters out of account. Adducing them in one's support is too often an effort to raise intellectual dust, or—shall we say?—a mere display of temper.

But there is one aspect of this subject on which I wish to touch because, in my own experience, I have found it a real difficulty. Does any moral quality attach to belief or disbelief?

There are many Christian statements which seem to bear out the affirmative view. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned."

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Or again in the Athanasian Creed: "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith. Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." But we have to remember a more general principle which lies at the root of all Christianity, and indeed of all morality, and which must be read into all these statements about belief or disbelief. It is this. Any sin of belief or disbelief, or indeed any sin of any kind, must be a voluntary act. The man must sin against the light he actually does, or might, possess. It was a great sin for a Christian to put a little incense on a flame before the statue of the Emperor, because so he belied what he knew to be true. But the same degree of condemnation does not apply to the honest pagan who knew no better. We must read this reservation into every moral condemnation. "All liars," says the writer of the Apocalypse, "shall have their part in the lake which burneth," but he does not think it necessary to explain—although that is implied—that by a liar he means one who knows what he says is untrue, not one who says what is untrue in ignorance. I have explained to you over and over again that no moral quality can attach to an action which is

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not the product of free-will. So, in a sense, if a man cannot help believing what is false, he cannot be held morally responsible.

But, mark a limitation. The drunkard could not help breaking open his wife's head, because he did not know what he was doing. But we do not on that account exculpate him from blame, because he took the drink that blinded his reason. He knew *then* that he was doing wrong.

So if a man wilfully blind himself to the truth by examining only half the evidence, or by a course of moral evil which blurs his higher faculties, he must be held responsible for his false belief.

But belief or unbelief which is the result of a perfectly straightforward, healthy and honest attempt to look facts in the face, can be a cause of no condemnation either in this world or the next. I hope I have made my meaning clear. This is the Christian, as it is the common-sense view.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

IN discussing the arguments against Christianity, we shall begin with the more general, and ascend to the more particular. And first I propose to deal with the difficulties presented by the problem of pain.

Moral evil we have already discussed. It depends on man's free-will. We have seen that if he had been created without free-will, he would have been a mere machine, destitute indeed of the potentiality of sin, but also of dignity, nobility and moral worth.

The problem of pain physical and mental stands on a different footing, and must be separately examined.

It constitutes undoubtedly one of the chief difficulties of a belief in God. In all ages men have felt how hard it is to reconcile the existence of pain and misery with the existence of an almighty and loving God. This it was, you know, that drove Annie Besant from Christi-



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anity. She saw her baby tortured by whooping-cough, and though we may well believe that the seeds of scepticism had long been germinating, this, according to her own account, turned her against Theism. Is it too much, by the way, to hope that that acute if somewhat erratic intellect may yet take back all her utterances against Christianity, as she has already recanted absolutely her former secularism and materialism.

I think it will be convenient to divide our consideration of the problem of pain into two heads—(1) the question of pain for which man is not responsible, and (2) the question of pain due to the fault of man.

First, then, the question of pain for which man is not responsible.

The chief, although by no means the only, example of this is met with in the case of the pains which seem by the laws of Nature to be inherent in the process of organic Evolution—the pains of the lower animals, for instance, in their struggle for existence. We also think of the earthquake, the cyclone and other convulsions of nature. As the apostle says, "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together."

Now we must be careful in the interest of fairness not to exaggerate this pain. It is

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exceedingly doubtful whether in animals in a state of nature—that is, apart from man's influence—there is really any great degree of pain.

Thus, as Illingworth points out, the pain has to be considered distributively, *i. e.* one animal does not suffer any more because many others suffer too. It is the pain of the individual that concerns us. How great or how little that pain may be is almost entirely a matter of conjecture.

Let me quote to you some valuable words on this subject.

“When we reflect on this struggle we may console ourselves with the full belief that the war of nature is not incessant; that death is generally prompt, and that the vigorous, the healthy and the happy survive and multiply.”

These are the words of no less a man than the great master, Charles Darwin.

Or take the following statement of the case :—

“On the whole the popular idea of the struggle for existence entailing misery and pain on the animal world is the very reverse of truth. What it really brings about is, the maximum of life and of the enjoyment of life, with the minimum of suffering and pain. Given the necessity of death and reproduction—and without these there could have been no pro-

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gressive development of the animal world—and it is difficult even to imagine a system by which a greater balance of happiness could have been secured.”

These are the words of a naturalist only second to Darwin—the co-discoverer with him of the principle of Natural Selection. I refer to Alfred Russel Wallace.

Animals, we must remember, like children and savages, probably make a great outcry about little matters, so that, in our eyes, their suffering is apt to be exaggerated. We should expect this when we consider the conditions of their social life. It is of the utmost importance to the herd or tribe that a sufferer should be able to bring his suffering home to his fellows, and as he cannot do this by articulate speech he emphasizes the suffering by exaggerated contortions and cries. Children and savages do likewise for the same reason, namely, that the faculty of language is less highly developed in them than in us.

To illustrate my point, take two types of speaker. The naturally eloquent man, who has abundant command of language to express himself and is a master of that great instrument, is quiet and self-controlled. Restrained eloquence is the highest eloquence. Hence he

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creates the greater thrill in his audience when, at some supreme moment, his voice rises to a shout. But the poor speaker, throughout his whole speech will shout himself hoarse, stamp his feet and thump the table, in his desperate efforts to deliver himself of his message. You have only to contrast the average Socialist speaker with the average street preacher to see what I mean.

I think, therefore, that the expression of pain in animals may be taken as exaggerated—an adaptation to their imperfect power of conveying their meaning.

It is to be noticed, also, that in extreme crises of excitement, when pain to the onlooker seems greatest, it is really apt to disappear altogether. I have often noticed that delivering a lecture is an excellent cure for toothache. So in the battle-field the soldier scarcely feels his wound. On the occasion of the recent Camberley murder, the victim who escaped with her life declared she was totally unconscious of the fact that her throat was cut, until she had fled some distance and found assistance. "Whymper, the mountaineer, fell on the Matterhorn several hundred feet, bounding from rock to rock, till fortunately embedded in a snowdrift near the edge of a tremendous precipice. He declares

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that while falling and feeling blow on blow, he neither lost consciousness nor suffered pain, merely thinking calmly that a few more blows would finish him." For myself, I have met with two accidents. As a child of six I fell from a height. As a lad of thirteen I was nearly drowned. In the first case, my mind, after I recovered consciousness, held no recollection whatever of the whole occurrence; the slip at the top when I missed my foothold, the descent through the air, the thud at the bottom—all was a complete blank. In the second case, while under water I retained consciousness, but had no feeling of pain or fear. Moreover, as illustrating how little animals really suffer, I may mention that I have seen a rat caught in a trap by the thigh, first scream vigorously, then turn round and proceed quietly to finish the bait which it had been eating when the trap snapped.

All this seems to show that animal pain is less than it seems, and that even in the case of man, at supreme crises of apparent suffering, the pain is generally absent. What really gives pain its sting in man is his intelligent contemplation of it before and after, his specially human feelings of anticipation, horror and recollection. But extreme pain always brings its own mitigation by fainting, shock, unconsciousness and so on.

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Further, I cannot accept the view that natural cataclysms, such as the earthquake or the cyclone, are inconsistent with Divine benevolence. Death in itself seems to be necessary for the reproduction and development of the race. Life would be a very dreary affair, moreover, if we were all wandering Jews. Death largely gives piquancy and colour to life. We clasp the forms of those we love with a fonder embrace because of the great shadow which hangs over us all. We have, it is true, a natural and a proper animal shrinking from death. You remember, One who was always perfectly human exclaimed, in His agony, "If it be possible let this cup pass from Me." But we should not really desire an indefinitely prolonged earthly existence. Now, death in the mass, while terrible to the onlooker, is really the most kindly form in which that dread angel can visit us. Who would not rather this than that he should waste away, a loathsome object, a source of danger to his friends, torn with anxiety for the future of his loved ones, worn out by the long watch for the approach of his great enemy? It has well been remarked that, if it were in the ordinary course of nature for men to die in groups of hundreds or thousands, it would seem to us no worse than death now seems. Suppose a change of system

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occurred and men died singly, should we not be inclined to cry out against the comparative cruelty of the new system and wish for a reversion to the old?

We come next to speak of that form of pain which is due to man's fault.—This is much more extensive than we might suppose. By far the greater amount of disease and mental suffering is due to man's disobedience to the laws of nature and of God. Take, for example, the great scourge of tuberculosis. It could be extirpated in a quarter of a century if men lived and let their fellows live in perfectly healthy surroundings.

Now, if you have followed my argument about free-will—that it is necessary to the dignity and glory of man's nature, that while it does not necessarily imply sin, it implies the potentiality of sin—you will see that much of such suffering is of a reclamatory character, and that man, not God, is responsible for it. God is responsible, as I have said, for the potentiality of sin, but not for the sin itself. The same remark applies to this kind of pain, which may be of the highest corrective value.

But here we are face to face with another great difficulty. It is this: the penalty often does not rest upon the sinner so much as upon

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some one else. "Man's inhumanity to man," says our national bard, "makes countless thousands mourn." Pain and suffering seem, like a contagion, to spread in ever-widening circles. Ah, this is the great pathos of life ! That little, unkempt, half-starved girl, little more than a baby, out in the cutting wind and sleet, amidst scenes of vice and squalor, searching and crying for Daddy, who must be dragged home from his drinking bout ! That stunted and withered old woman, bent like a half-shut knife, who has been slaving half her life for a sweater's wage and now has nothing to look forward to but the workhouse ! That mother, eating her heart out for her daughter's shame ! That little school-boy who is stupid at his work, and cries over his sum, poor little fellow, because he can't get it right ! He has had half-a-score of drunken ancestors, and in his stupidity lies the fruit of their sin. Ah, the pity of it ! we say. Ah, the cruelty ! Ah, the injustice ! How can you tell me that God so loved the world when the iron of these things enters into my very soul ? In the thought of human agony, I am caught up into the same circle, I am smitten with the same plague, the curse is upon me too !

And yet ! And yet ! Would we have it altogether otherwise ? Would we have each



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one suffer, the others feeling nothing, caring nothing for him? Nay then, the future of the race were indeed dark! Do I wish that I felt these things less? Nay rather, I recognize that this instinct of sympathy, this principle of vicarious suffering, is just that very bond which binds us all into one great solidarity of mankind. I recognize that it is better to be miserable like a man than to be happy like a pig. If we must suffer—and suffering there must be while there is sin—in God's name, I say, let us suffer together! Suffering is contagious, suffering is vicarious, suffering falls on those who least deserve it, just because man is higher than the brutes, just because human life is full of the divine!

In this principle we touch the very centre and essence of Christianity. Here, too, it is that Christianity, more than all other religions, shows itself so intensely human. Besides the one glorious and successful Calvary, there have been many unsuccessful, many abortive Calvaries. By suffering with and for others, men redeem each other in every age.

This, indeed, is God's way of salvation, God's way of redemption! God so loved the world—yes—that He gave His only begotten Son. O crowning mystery of life, so unfathomable to

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the intellect, yet so easily read by the heart, so sad and yet so glorious! O Crown of thorns, piercing and painful, yet, as we gaze, transfigured into a diadem of ineffable gladness and light!

I shall not, then, dwell further on this theme of undeserved suffering. I think you can see how it is that in this lies the source of sympathy, and that in sympathy, human and divine, lies all our hope here and hereafter.

Only one point further. Sympathy by suffering with the suffering is at all times beautiful, but it is divine when it overflows the circle of its own preferences and conventions and reaches out to take the hand of those that differ most from us—the great, hungry, stupid, sinful, far-away multitude. Now Christianity tells us of a God who stoops to woo an alienated and rebellious race. “God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.”

In this doctrine of the Cross, then, so misunderstood, so misrepresented, lies the central truth at once of Christianity and of human life.

I have considered the problem of pain, I know, in a very imperfect and fragmentary way. And I will tell you just why my consideration of it is imperfect and fragmentary. It is because you can always meet me with the

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argument from Omnipotence. Omnipotence, you can always say, might have ordained the whole system otherwise. Animal pain is exaggerated. Granted; but why should there be animal pain at all? Why should Omnipotence not have designed a scheme of Evolution that would not have involved pain? You say vicarious suffering is a law of life. Granted; but why should Omnipotence not have drawn up the whole scheme otherwise?

Well, you must remember, Omnipotence does not imply the power to do what is absurd or self-contradictory. Omnipotence does not imply the power of ordaining that two and two shall make five. Now we have not, with our imperfect knowledge, the means of solving the question of what is absurd and what is not. A dog would not understand that it is self-contradictory and absurd to suppose that two and two might, in certain circumstances, make five. I suppose this would be clear to many savages, but, on the other hand, many savages would be unable to understand that seven and eight would never make sixteen. Many educated, civilized people would not recognize it as absurd to suppose that the difference between the squares of any two quantities might sometimes not be exactly equal to the difference of the two

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quantities multiplied by their sum. We can, I think, quite understand that without the potentiality of sin there can be no nobility. We can dimly see that without the capacity for pain there can be no pleasure. And it is quite possible that much else which we suppose could be improved by Omnipotence is really not capable of improvement, because the suggested amendment itself partakes of the nature of an absurdity or self-contradiction. In short, just because we have not at our command the data necessary for a complete explanation of the subject we can give no final and absolutely satisfactory answer to the problem.

Again, the difficulty of the Problem of Pain is increased, if we hold the theory of Utilitarianism—a theory almost universally held by secularists. This theory teaches that happiness is the only good. Moral worth is only of value as it is a means of gaining happiness. And conversely pain, or the absence of pleasure, is the only evil. Sin is only evil in so far as it leads to pain. But most Christians and most philosophers deny this altogether. Pain is not the only or the chief evil. Nay, as a means towards the highest good, viz. moral good, it may be itself a good.

Pain, it seems to me, may be compared to a discord in music. To the untrained ear this

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seems disagreeable and objectionable. But to the educated ear occasional discord is essential to harmony. I well remember, when as a child I used to drum out tunes by ear on a piano, my ideally harmonious sound was the major third, and my ideal of harmony therefore consisted of an excruciating succession of major thirds. In those days when I discovered a discord in printed music it struck me with a shock of mystery and surprise, just as, to compare small things and persons with great, pain strikes the utilitarian philosopher. It seemed to me inexplicable how any great musician could put such intensely disagreeable discords in his music. But now I know that discord sets off harmony just as suffering makes for the dignity and beauty of human life.

This brings to my mind the case of a great poet who recently died a miserable death. His life had been spent in the pursuit of beauty, beauty without goodness and without God. He felt it necessary for the development of a perfectly artistic mind that he should know all sides of life. But there was one side of it which, strange to say, seems never to have struck him as containing in it the elements of poetic beauty, namely, suffering. Moreover he was a man intensely vain, beyond the common

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vanity of men. Well, the time came when he had to drink the cup of misery and humiliation to the very dregs. The time came when he, the cultured and refined, stood on the platform at Clapham Junction under a drizzling rain, handcuffed to other criminals, jeered at by the bystanders who had discovered his identity. It was only after this that he made the new discovery that suffering borne with humility was the grandest and most beautiful thing in life. To the development of this new poetic idea—humility in suffering—he resolved to devote all his remaining energy. What he might have made of it, whether he might have risen to higher truth, or whether he might only have found a new pose, neither you nor I can ever know, because in the midst of his plans God said to him, “Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee.”

Lastly, it must be remembered that to the Christian, pain can only be properly interpreted by the doctrine of Immortality. Christianity teaches us that life's sorrows and disappointments fade away in the glory of God's eternal hills, in the light of the Life Everlasting—“I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.”

## CHAPTER VII

### PRAYER

I go on next to the subject of prayer as objected to by the secularist critic of Christianity.

Now, of course, there is an objection he makes which, granted his premises, is perfectly valid. If there be no God, it would be absurd to pray. Thus we might find the question resolve itself into a discussion on the existence of God. Yet, it may be, if we abandoned our belief in God, the universal human instinct of prayer might still assert itself, and in our extremity we might sob forth an almost inarticulate cry for help into the darkness. "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul." And as I have said elsewhere, "This is the most glimmering elementary expression of faith and may excite the contempt of the smugly confident, yet sometimes I think that, just as a father rejoices when his infant with dawning intelligence first laughs and crows and reaches out his hands to his, so such an inarticulate

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effort of faith must be very dear to the heart of God, and that He will assuredly guard the weak seedling with His tenderest care till, in His good time, it shall burst into full bloom.”<sup>1</sup>

But this is not at all the question raised by most objectors. They say in effect, “We are prepared, for the sake of argument, to make you a present of your God, yet we can show that it is impossible for Him to answer prayer.”

Such objectors may possibly still grant some utility to prayer, but of a purely subjective character. A good effect is produced on me by my own prayer, although God has nothing to do with it. Of course, Christians do not despise or minimize this subjective aspect of prayer. Some, I am sorry to say, are willing to be content with it as if prayer had no other value. This, however, is quite contrary to the teaching of the Bible and of the Christian Church in all ages.

But we have to consider what can be said against the possibility of God’s answering.

The objection may be put on the ground, first of the universal rule of Natural Law, and secondly on the character of the Christian Deity.

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on the Relation between Faith and Reason* (Wyllie & Sons, Aberdeen), p. 60.



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First, then, with regard to Natural Law. It is said that the world is ruled by absolute and unchanging law, and that it is absurd to expect God's interference with this law in response to our prayers.

Now we are apt, in this matter, to be tyrannized over by words. What do we mean by asserting the reign of Law? After all, we simply mean this, do we not? that if a given event occur in certain circumstances, it will follow again under the same circumstances. Now if I fail to pray for help against a temptation in one case and yield to that temptation, the secularist would argue that, on the principle of the reign of Law, when the circumstances recur and I do pray for help, I must fail just the same—the circumstances being the same. But, then, he forgets the circumstances are not the same. In the one case I prayed, in the other I did not. Surely that is clear enough. Certain circumstances A B C combine to produce a certain result X. But if we add to A B and C another circumstance, namely D, then the result X will not necessarily follow in exactly the same way. But you commit yourself to the contrary view when you try to bully me out of the habit of prayer by throwing at my head the principle of Law—the uniformity of Nature. You enunciate

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the opinion that when we say Nature is uniform we mean that, if a certain result follow under certain circumstances, it will also follow under other circumstances. Which is absurd. Of course it is open to you to say that the new circumstance D is incapable of producing the particular effect attributed to it. Ah, well, that may be arguable, but the uniformity of Nature has nothing to do with it.

But why should it seem to you impossible that prayer should produce some definite effect, say, for example, in sickness? As long as I confine myself to physical agencies, to the surgeon's knife or the physician's drug, you admit the validity of my position. What is the difference in the case of prayer? It amounts to this, that you deny the possibility of a purely mental or spiritual act producing a change in the physical event. But how absurd is your position thus baldly stated! Has mind, then, no influence over matter? Am I incapable, not indeed of breaking the laws of nature, but of redistributing and modifying their action by my own mental act? I make a mental effort of the will to raise my hand to my head. What are the effects of this mental action. To begin with, matter obeys me; my hand rises to my head. And secondary results follow. It is an

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undeniable scientific fact that when my hand rises I give, by the force of gravity, a tug to the earth, so as to move its whole bulk ever so slightly, and the effort of my will, though infinitely reduced, is felt throughout the planetary system and the outer stellar spaces of the universe.)

( The effect of prayer, indeed, is beyond our ken in the method of its working, because its range is amid the unseen and mysterious fields of God's infinity. But because we cannot understand the how, must we deny the fact? If so, we should also have to deny the fact of gravity because we cannot explain its action. Or to put it otherwise, if we ourselves are capable, by an effort of our will, of altering physical effects, shall we deny the same power to the Creator of all the worlds? )

The truth is, that we have not yet disabused our minds of the old eighteenth-century idea of Deism—a theory which made God wind up the clock of the universe and then leave it to go by itself. If ever He puts out His hand to correct its working, we call His action an interference or a miracle. This is an entire misconception of the methods of Divine Providence. God does not merely look at His Creation from the outside. He does not merely transcend the

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Universe. He is immanent in it. It is the outward expression of the Divine Thought, the material vesture of His Glory. He reveals Himself not merely in the exception, but in the Law. His Providence compasses us behind and before. He transcends not only space, but time. He binds all into one harmonious whole. He is the very pulse of the machine.

I shall have to return to this subject again, so I need not develop it further just now. I cannot do better than conclude this part of the argument by quoting two distinguished scientists on this subject.

Sir Oliver Lodge, writing in the *Hibbert Journal* of January, 1903, says:—

“If we have instinct . . . for prayer, for communion with saints or with Deity, let us trust that instinct. . . . Religious people seem to be losing some of their faith in prayer, they think it scientific not to pray in the sense of simple petition. They may be right; it may be the highest attitude never to ask for anything specific, only for acquiescence. If saints feel it so they are doubtless right, but so far as ordinary science has anything to say to the contrary a more childlike attitude might turn out truer, more in accordance with the total scheme. Prayer for a fancied good that might really be an injury would be

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foolish, prayer for breach of law would be not foolish only but profane; but who are we to dogmatize too positively concerning law? . . . Prayer, we have been told, is a mighty engine of achievement, but we have ceased to believe it. Why should we be so incredulous? Even in medicine, for instance, it is not really absurd to suggest that drugs and no prayer may be almost as foolish as prayer and no drugs. Mental and physical are interlocked."

Again, Professor James of Harvard University, who is described as "certainly the most brilliant psychologist living," in his work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, says:—

"In prayer spiritual energy which would otherwise slumber does become action and spiritual work of some kind is effected really."

I have now to pass to the second argument that may be adduced against the possibility of God's hearing and answering prayer.

It is based upon the Christian idea that God is omniscient and beneficent. God knows all things. God knows our needs. God knows what is best for us. God is perfectly good, and therefore He will certainly do the best for us. It is therefore foolish to suppose that we can alter His judgments by our ignorant wills.

Now, in order to answer this objection, it will

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be well that we should first make a digression, to consider what we can know and what we do not know about the Nature of God. It is a stupendous subject; and we may well pause on its threshold in an attitude of reverence and humility.

"Our modesty," says Hooker, "is to know that we know Him not as He is, neither can know Him; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon the earth, therefore it behoves our words to be wary and few."

There is such a thing as a truly Christian agnosticism. This revelation, indeed, tells us of a God who possesses personality, wisdom, power, love and goodness, like our own personality, wisdom, power, love and goodness, but infinitely, immeasurably transcending ours in greatness and depth. Yet, so far these attributes are really like the same attributes in us. We are made in His image. It is therefore a heresy from the Christian point of view to say that the goodness of God is something different in kind from our goodness. "I cannot," says Whittier, "call that good in Him which evil is in me." To do so would be to play with words. So far,

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then, if Christianity be true we can and do know God.

But, then, we must never forget that this knowledge is but partial. He has indeed condescended to speak to us in our baby language, so that we may understand Him. Yet all that we know is but the merest fraction of the ineffable greatness and splendour of God. In the divine nature there are unfathomed wonders, characters, attributes incapable of expression to our limited capacity. We feebly light our steps with the flickering candle of our imperfect thought, but the great unknowable stretches on every side into the abyss around. In our humble and circumscribed valley we cannot reach out to the distant Alpine summits of the Divine, nor can we explore the untrodden vastnesses of God's infinity.

My dog can never know the depths of my nature. His capacities do not admit of it. But what little he does know is true and real. He knows that I love him and that he can trust me. And this imperfect knowledge which he does possess is of much more importance to him than would be an idea of my science, philosophy, religion. We may conceive that he is in some degree able to understand that I am an animal so far like him, but if I were to tell him

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that I am a personality he could not apprehend the idea. I know in the light of Revelation that God is a Personality, but there are other aspects of His Being which are unknown and unknowable to me. So far, then, I repeat, there is a truly Christian agnosticism.<sup>1</sup>

Yet remember always that, as in the case of the dog, the little we do know is real knowledge. Even by the light of nature and reason we are entitled to conclude that God must at least equal the highest of His works; that two and two will not make five. And where should we seek for a better reflection of His attributes than in the highest aspirations and affections of His highest creature known to us.

Do you want to know what the love of God is? With your present capacities you can never fully know. But you can faintly figure it to yourself by your own love. Fathers and mothers among you, have some of you got a little child, a baby boy or a baby girl, who is the very light of your eyes, the touch of whose fingers thrills you with an unspeakable tenderness, for whose sake you would willingly sacrifice all your being, from whose life you would ward off every pain, every sin, but whom yet you have to train up

<sup>1</sup> See *The Unknown God, and other Sermons*, by the Rev. A. H. Craufurd.



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and strengthen even by the discipline sometimes of disappointment and deprivation? Do you remember how your heart bounded with joy when, before he yet could speak, he showed in his baby way that he wanted you? Do you remember the agony of the suspense you felt that night when he fell ill? Do you realize how your heart would be strained to breaking point if he strayed away from you to strangers, who were unkind to him? Well, that—*that* is the love of God for you, only infinitely, incomparably greater.

Christianity reveals to you a God, who stoops to hunger for your love, because He first loved you and gave Himself for you to save you from yourself.

Is it wonderful, then, or surprising that such a God should seek to have you communicate with Him, should condescend to ask for your prayers, should bid you put your hand in His, feel your dependence on Him, yield yourself to His guidance, in articulate words ask Him for what you want, even though, in His wisdom, He may not always grant it?

Is it not, then, evident to us already that once we grasp this larger thought of God, these objections to prayer break up and dissolve of themselves, almost without reply? It is now

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evident that it is absurd for us to lay bounds upon the methods of working of Divine Wisdom and Divine Love.

To object that God already knows what is best for us and does not need to be asked, is to forget that, through the mere fact that I offer prayer, that may become best for me which would not otherwise be best. If I do not pray for my friend's recovery, perhaps there may be something to his advantage or mine in his dying. But if I have prayed the balance may be thrown the other way. By an answer to my prayer a far greater blessing may be obtained, namely, a realization of God's nearness to me and willingness to help, and of my dependence on Him, as well as a binding of myself and my friend together in the bonds of a common devotion. Hence, the mere act of praying may make that best for me which would not otherwise be best.

And here I must protest against the way in which the Secularist sets prayer over against work and God's service over against man's service. As if they were not really one and the same! Prayer is a form of work; we cannot serve God unless we serve man. Prayer is worse than useless if we do not try to help ourselves and others. Who, in our experience,

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is the man that, in the ordinary affairs of life, in difficulty and in danger, is most self-reliant, most steady-handed and cool-headed? I say it is the man of prayer. Christianity tells us explicitly that religion is a sham if it does not involve work for our fellow-men. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me." "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love. . . . If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

Much that I have said about prayer applies equally to praise. Does He not need our praise? He stoops to ask it, because His sacred Heart yearns for the love of ours, because praise is the natural outpouring of a loving heart, because our weak nature requires the spoken word. He loves our praise, because it is the outward expression of inward devotion and affection.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

I PASS now to my next subject—a very large one—that, namely, of the Inspiration and Authority of the Bible.

Very confused ideas on this subject are abroad. We have first of all to make clear what the Bible is, and what it is not.

What must a Christian, if he is a consistent Christian, believe about the Bible? Or, to put it more technically, what is of faith regarding the Bible?

Now the Christian Church generally is committed to the view that the whole of the Bible is divinely inspired. That is our point of departure.

But when we come to consider what precise meaning is attached to the word Inspiration, we find the Church has been exceedingly chary of laying down any final definition. Certain it is that when Christians, early in the second century, gradually and unconsciously sifted out the Canon

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of Scripture (*i. e.* the book as we now have it) from the mass of apocryphal writing by which it was surrounded, they never promulgated any particular view as to the method of Inspiration. They said, in effect, "These are our sacred books. To their teaching we are committed." But more than this they did not say, and from that time to this it has been exceedingly rare for even separate bodies of Christians to attempt any definite formula in explanation of Inspiration.

But, you may say, I prefer to go to the Bible itself to ascertain what Christianity teaches on the subject.

Now the Old Testament makes no claim for itself, neither does the New Testament for the Book as a whole. It was manifestly impossible for the writers of the New Testament to do so, because the Canon of Scripture was not completed when the individual books were written. But the New Testament does make certain claims for the Old Testament. You must remember that in the New Testament "the Scriptures" does not mean the whole Bible, but only the Jewish scriptures. Well, let us see something of what is said about the latter.

Our Lord often refers to the Old Testament. He speaks of it in terms of high respect—

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“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

But He also speaks of it as an imperfect revelation, to be supplemented and corrected in the light of fuller knowledge—“Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time . . . but I say unto you . . .”

He even makes it clear that certain things which are sanctioned in the Old Testament are to be regarded, in this fuller light, as wrong—“Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you . . .” And He goes on to correct the ordinance of Moses.

If we pass now from the words of Jesus Christ in the Gospels we shall find in other parts of the New Testament references to the Jewish scriptures. I shall quote one or two of them :—  
“All scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.”  
“There is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God.”

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Let us, in the light of these statements, look a little more closely at what may be implied by the doctrine of Biblical Inspiration. Let us do so carefully, but avoid over-dogmatism. I desire to put forward these views most tentatively, and am most ready to modify them if they can be shown to be wrong.

Well, now, there is one view of Biblical Inspiration which I think we may put aside. You may remember the sublime invocation of the Holy Spirit uttered by Milton at the beginning of *Paradise Lost*. He there asks for precisely the same fund of Inspiration which he supposes to have been at the command of the Biblical writers—

“And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer  
Before all temples the upright heart and pure.  
Instruct me, for Thou knowest. Thou from the first  
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread  
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast abyss,  
And mad’st it pregnant: what in me is dark  
Illumine, what is low raise and support;  
That to the height of this great argument  
I may assert eternal Providence,  
And justify the ways of God to men.”

Now we must suppose that Milton expected an answer to his prayer, and must have regarded himself as in some sense inspired. This, I take it, is not the meaning which Christians apply to

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the Inspiration of the Bible. We do not mean simply that it is inspired as Milton or Shakespeare, or Thomas à Kempis, or James Martineau, or Thomas Carlyle, were inspired. Whether the inspiration was the same in kind or not, it was totally different in degree. Christians are certainly committed to the view that the Bible is incomparably superior to all other books.

Well, what do we then imply by the term Inspiration of the Bible? I think several things.

First, we must suppose that the writers were men who were specially selected and called by God's Holy Spirit to the work. They possessed some kind of spiritual genius and they had a special vocation. They were a picked class.

Secondly, we cannot use the word Inspiration without implying that, in writing, they had from God some kind of guidance and assistance which helped their intellect, affections, memories and wills, not indeed so as to supplant these or to take their place, but to strengthen, clear and purify them.

Thirdly, we must suppose that the Church received Divine guidance in selecting the books of the New Testament from all other early Christian literature. The primitive Christians



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do not appear to have been very generally giant intellects or men of exceptional culture, yet the accuracy with which they sifted the gold from the dross was remarkable. One has only to dip into early Christian writings to realize how incomparably the Canon of Scripture towers above the rest, not only in spirituality, but in intellectuality and even in style. For example, the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of Barnabas deal with the same subject, but while the former is full of lofty thoughts nobly expressed, the latter is simply puerile.

It may be well now to turn to the other side of the picture and consider certain meanings which we are not bound to imply by the term Inspiration, which, in fact, we must not so imply.

We are not to regard the Bible as a complete and unmistakable revelation given from Heaven direct, book by book, chapter by chapter, verse by verse, and word by word. That, you know, is the view taken by the Mohammedan of his Koran. This book was said to have been dictated to Mohammed word for word by a pigeon. For a Christian to regard his Bible in this way is not religion, but superstition. We have no right to speak of the Bible as dictated. The Inspiration of the Holy Spirit never

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destroyed the personality of the writer. The revelation took the imprint of the medium through which it passed. According to God's general plan of Self-revelation, the divine was revealed through and in the human. Hence there is in the Bible both a divine and a human element. The capacity of the human for transmitting the divine is limited by what we may call its mental refraction.

I have said that this system of divine revelation through imperfect and human media is God's general method. As the apostle says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." We see the same principle in connection with conscience. I have, in a former chapter, shown you reasons for thinking that conscience is indeed a divine voice, but I have explained that it speaks relatively to our imperfect information and understanding of all the circumstances attending a given moral action. It is a revelation relative to the individual capacity for receiving it. So it is with the Bible. Thus it is that the Bible takes the infantile cosmogony and imperfect science of man's early development and works through them. No attempt is made to correct erroneous notions about the earth and sky, or the pro-

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cesses of Nature, because that is not the proper work of revelation. Such mistaken notions are capable of being corrected, and, as a matter of fact, have been corrected by human reason. Through the cosmogony of the time the divine Voice speaks, but the cosmogony itself it neither approves nor corrects.

Let me give you an illustration. You remember the story of the Welsh chieftain who, supposing that his hound had killed his child, plunged his sword into the animal's heart. Immediately after he discovered the child alive. Now it would be just as reasonable to expect conscience to warn Llewelyn of the actual facts in order to save him from his rash act, as it would be to expect the Bible to correct human science. The inspiration of the Bible acts through the imperfect knowledge of man.

It follows from what I have said about the human and divine element in the Bible, that the revelation of God therein contained must be sought in the Book as a whole. The Bible, in fact, to be properly understood must be taken as a whole. You know how a layman—by which I mean one who is not a lawyer—draws hasty conclusions from his perusal of an Act of Parliament. But the lawyer tells him that the interpretation is not so simple as it

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looks. He says you have to take such another Act which has not been repealed or has been passed since, and "read it into" this one. So with the Bible. You are not entitled to take something out of Genesis and, studying it alone, draw your conclusions from it without mastering the principles laid down elsewhere. Isaiah must be read into Genesis, the New Testament into the Old. The Law and the Prophets are only properly understood in the light of the fuller revelation of God in Christ.

If there are any Christians who would deny this principle—and we are so addicted to the vicious principle of pitching isolated texts at each other's heads that there may be some—let me give you an example which will, perhaps, convince you. Take the following passage:—

"That which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth beasts ; even one thing befalleth them ; as the one dieth so dieth the other ; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast, for all is vanity."

Now is there any Christian who will contend that that passage just as it stands expresses the full mind of God regarding human life? Clearly we must read this passage and the whole of the deeply pessimistic book Ecclesiastes in the light of other parts of the Bible.

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I must state something else which the Bible is not, and here I may tread on some one's toes. The Bible is not a book intended for unbelievers. It is never addressed to persons who do not believe in its religion with a view to convince them. The Old Testament is, of course, always addressed to Jews, and the New Testament to Christians. St. Paul, for example, in his Epistles always assumes that those to whom he speaks believe in Jesus Christ, and are united to the Christian community by a common faith and common religious ordinances. The early Christians were not converted by reading the Bible as unbelievers ; in fact, there was no Bible to read. As Professor Milligan says, "The first stirrings of faith were awakened by the general tradition of the Church. Men were attracted to her by the sight of her blessed and glorious life, and then were gradually, within the bosom of her family, made more and more acquainted with the fullness of the facts from which that life sprang and by which it was sustained. So far as their faith was at first concerned, they could have done, and they actually did, without the Gospels altogether." We might send grosses of Bibles to the heathen without the desired result, unless we sent a Christian believer to explain to them the principles on which the Bible is to be interpreted.

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The principle "Seek and ye shall find" is one that holds in most departments of life. We get what we are looking for—nothing else. Three men go into Westminster Abbey. One is an enthusiast for the honour of England, and finds himself there among the memorials that are so eloquent of a mighty past. His patriotic imagination is stirred and his heart beats with his country's heart. Another is full of admiration and love for the old Catholic faith, and he sees in imagination the bands of Benedictine monks chanting their plain-song, whose weird, plaintive melody floats away overhead, and dies away amidst the sacred haze of those wonderful arches and echoing roofs. He, too, finds what he looks for. The third looks for and finds—nothing. "Come," he says, "we can't smoke here. Let's go somewhere else." So it is with the Bible. Go to it as a Christian, and you will find in its wondrous pages ever fresh confirmation of a lifelong faith. Go to it as a scoffer, and you will find—follies, impossibilities, perhaps nothing. The proper place for a Bible is in the hands of a Christian believer.

And here, if you will allow me a momentary digression, lies one of our objections to the recent Government Education Bill. It was one of the points of their scheme on which great

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emphasis was laid, that the Bible might be put into the hands of persons who do not believe it, with instructions to impart its teaching to children. That seems to us most objectionable, and personally, with the Bishop of Birmingham and Mr. Bramwell Booth, I should far rather have purely secular teaching in our public schools than leave the character of the Biblical teaching to the caprice of the individual teacher.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE OLD TESTAMENT

TURNING now to the Old Testament, let us consider some special points in connection with it, bearing in mind always the general principles which have been laid down.

I may say that I do not intend, at this point, to deal with what is called the Higher Criticism. That will come in better in connection with the New Testament. This for three reasons. First, I must confess at once that I have very slight knowledge of Old Testament criticism. For one thing, I am totally unacquainted with the language in which it is written. Secondly, because the results of such Old Testament criticism are still in a most fluid and unsettled condition, and it is well for us outsiders to reserve our judgment upon them until they have been better matured. On the other hand, scientific criticism of the New Testament is very much riper, and is gradually and surely reaching fairly definite results. Thirdly, I do



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not think that from the purely spiritual and Christian point of view, the matter, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, is of very great moment. It would be of immense importance if the Gospels or the Epistles were proved to be forgeries of the second century. But I cannot, for the life of me, understand how the Christian Faith is materially affected by the question of whether Cain and Abel are mythical characters, whether Moses wrote the whole or the greater part of the Pentateuch, or whether there are one or two or half-a-dozen Isaiahs.

Among the arguments against Christianity which have a most powerful effect on young and generous minds, are the attacks made, in the light of Christian ideas, on the morality of parts of the Old Testament.

The truth is that these attacks are unanswerable if you hold the Koran view of the Bible, viz. that it was dictated word for word from the first chapter of Genesis to the last of Revelations, the purely human agent playing no material part in the delivery of the message. As you know, that is not the view to which I adhere or to which the Christian Church is committed. And, indeed, if you clearly apprehend what has been already said, you will have realized that this argument has

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been disposed of by the general principles advanced.

Thus I have said that the Bible is to be taken as a whole. I read in the New Testament that "God is love," that is to say, this attribute is inwoven with His very essence. The Christian, therefore, must say at once that any interpretation of parts of the Bible which makes Him a God of violence, of cruelty, of race hatred, must not for a moment be entertained. Even the less informed Christian who has not grasped the full answer to these objections feels at once that, even if he cannot give it, there must be some other explanation possible. I remember very well that in my sceptical days, this argument from the Old Testament had great weight with me. When I became persuaded of the truth of Christianity, I cannot say that these objections were fully answered. Rather, they simply fell away. They were reserved to be thought out later on. But these answers, in the light of an intelligent understanding of the nature of Inspiration, are, as it now seems to me, absolutely satisfactory.

The revelation of God given in the Old Testament is a progressive revelation, a record of God's providential dealings with Israel in preparation for the fuller light of Christ. We

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have seen that the New Testament itself regards the Old as imperfect and in some respects unprofitable in the newer light. The early Israelites were barbarians among barbarians, and the truth was only imparted to them as they were able to bear it. The spiritual thought of the Psalms and of the Prophets is higher than that of the Pentateuch or Kings and Chronicles. The evidence of God's revelation in the Old Testament lies in this, that by it a nation was trained up from the crudest notions of God and morality to a lofty monotheism which ultimately compared with the religion around almost as daylight to starlight. And God's teachings were those which alone were possible in those days of feeble thought and still feebler morality ; they were always directed to the healthy development of better things.

Thus the proposed sacrifice by Abraham of his son Isaac, revolting as it may, and ought to, appear to us, had the effect of finally abolishing human sacrifices among the chosen people ; the laws of divorce were meant to rescue them from the promiscuity which existed among surrounding nations ; slavery, universally practised in the cruelest form among the nearest Gentiles, was softened and regulated by the law providing for the manumission of domestic slaves every seven years.

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But, further, the objection is made that if God had made a revelation at all, it would have been immediate, absolutely clear, universal and unmistakable. Somebody instances, I think, the nebular hypothesis, and maintains that God could have explained it definitely and clearly, and Moses would have understood Him, for he was an intelligent man. Well, I dare say he would, but then the object of revelation is not to make known such things as can be reached by the unaided light of human reason. It was not the facts of science that were the subject of revelation at all. But if God had explained to Moses that every human life is sacred and beloved in His sight, that slavery is wrong, that with God there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, I do not think that Moses would have understood Him, or if he had, I do not think he would have carried the children of Israel along with him.

Let me here adapt an argument from Illingworth, which I shall put in my own way, but briefly. The whole object of revelation is to train up man for the knowledge and love of God. Now God is a personality, and to acquire a knowledge of this personality, however imperfect, we must proceed by slow steps. How

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do we come to know other men, to know them, I mean, in the most intimate possible way? Of course, in a sense, the inmost life of other men is hidden from us, as is the life of God, so that we can never fully penetrate it. Nor can we ever fully communicate ourselves to others. There are always barriers, mistakes, misunderstandings, try as we will. And human friendship is a plant of very slow growth; it requires the most delicate treatment for its development. If it springs up quite suddenly it is too often a spurious growth, depending not on deep mutual knowledge, the touch of soul on soul, but mere superficial liking. A certain degree of reserve must be exercised in its development, else, by pouring the full light of day upon the young bud, it quickly withers away. The plant of real friendship cannot be forced. You know the odious person who, the first time you meet him, makes you his bosom confidant, telling you all about the conversion of his soul and his differences with his wife. With refined and deep souls this kills friendship at once. Again, there are some men who, when the glow of friendship seems to cool, always want to rush in and put it right by explanation. More friendships are killed by frank explanations than we can ever know. Perhaps the reason why the ancient

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ideal of friendship has largely decayed among us is because we are, in these busy days, always in such a fret and a hurry to put everything right at once.

On the other hand, of course, reserve may go too far. There are some men who have a hunger for human friendship and yet never obtain it, because they have somehow not the art of self-communication to others in the deepest sense. Intimacy with them goes so far, but seems always to stop at a certain point. So their inner lives are lived to the end, alone. There is always something in others which throws them back on their too sensitive reserve.

Observe, further, that to attain this knowledge of others, sympathy is necessary, and sympathy implies a certain likeness of character. If I am to make an intimate friend of a sensual man I must develop sympathy by becoming more or less like him. If I am to make a friend of a saint I must acquire some of his personal holiness.

How, then, are we to become the friends of God? Manifestly by essentially the same process of sympathy with His nature, by some degree of approximation to His holiness. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

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Now Illingworth specially applies the argument of slow growth to individual growth in grace, but it is equally applicable to the race. If the human race is ever to develop a higher knowledge of God, it must be gradually prepared for it by moral and mental growth. Any attempt at forcing this friendship would kill it. There is a long and tedious path towards a clearer light and a fuller love, till our now enlightened eyes shall see the land of far distances and we shall know even as we are known.

You see, then, why revelation to the race as to the individual must be gradual, a matter of slow evolution, progressive; not as some have imagined, sudden, direct, irresistible.

There is one Old Testament doctrine so closely interwoven with Christianity and so misunderstood as to require a brief separate treatment. I refer to the Fall of Man.

The doctrine is this, that man existed to begin with in a state of innocence, from which by sin he fell, and that this fall has somehow affected all the subsequent race.

Now this, as I shall subsequently show you, represents a profound truth which must have been an actual fact of history. It is not necessary to accept the literal account that the

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fall of man took place by a woman eating fruit in a garden, after a conversation with a serpent. That is a figure, but a figure representing a fact in a dramatic way—namely, that man was originally free from sin, but by an exercise of his free-will vitiated all his nature.

Let me first disabuse your minds of the idea that Evolution has anything to say against this. There is a hazy, popular, but most unscientific notion that Evolution always means progress towards higher and better things, and that the notion of an original state of innocence is therefore inconsistent with Evolution.

Now I ask you first to notice that while Evolution tells of progress, taking animals and plants as a whole, it by no means guarantees progress in the case of any particular species such as man. Thus the animal *Sacculina* is of extremely simple structure—merely a bag with some roots of attachment. But in former ages it was a shellfish of considerable complexity. So the Tunicates now resemble the lower group of mollusca, but they were formerly vertebrates. The environments of these animals favoured simplicity. They have therefore degenerated. So might man.

But, further, the terms progress and degeneration as used by biologists have nothing to do



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with moral progress or moral degeneration. Progress in the biological sense means higher specialization of structure—becoming more complex. Degeneration in the biological sense means reversion to earlier type—becoming simpler. Hence these terms have nothing to do with the moral question of the Fall of Man.

Now assuming that man has been derived from lower forms, and further that he possesses free-will which they do not possess, it follows that (1) at one stage he was still an animal destitute of free-will, (2) at a certain stage he became possessed of free-will, and (3) he used this free-will to choose wrong—at least sometimes. We call the first occasion on which he did so the Fall of Man. The period that intervened between his developing free-will and applying it to choose wrongly is the primeval state of innocence.

It is clear, therefore, that the doctrine of the Fall of Man follows necessarily from the doctrine of Evolution read in the light of free-will.

The process is repeated under our own observation in the microcosm of each individual life, although the moment of transition from one stage to another may scarcely be traceable. We have the helpless infant, the dawn of free-will, the primeval state of innocence, the first

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wrong-doing. In all this is plainly set forth the Fall of Man in miniature.

In order to make this matter clearer, let me quote to you the sketch which I have elsewhere suggested of man's moral infancy.

"In his family relationship he stands nearest to his brethren of the animal kingdom and from other forms he has undoubtedly been evolved. The first stage of this Evolution was a simple change such as had occurred in nature thousands of times before. The progenitor of man—one of the *Primates*, a group of higher mammals—began to be marked off from his fellows in certain respects. Thus his body became less hairy and he acquired a more frequent custom of assuming the erect posture—an occasional habit for obvious reasons in all arboreal climbers, as the cat, squirrel, monkey. This habitual erect posture carried with it a number of slight consequent modifications of structure. Far more important was the extraordinary and unprecedented expansion which took place of his mental powers. True, his was even yet only an animal intelligence, but so keen and true was it as to fix a gulf between him and his fellows and to place him in a position among them of indisputable supremacy. He was now ripe for the vast change which was

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to revolutionize his whole mental and moral nature. . . . The time came when man's eyes glowed with a diviner light, when his whole nature, transfigured into the image of God, pulsated with a fuller and higher life. Hitherto a mere animal, the bondsman of impulse and instinct, he wakes into the broad light of self-consciousness and free-will. 'God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.'

"Now, after this gift of free-will there must have elapsed a certain period, it might be very short, before it would occur to man to use his freedom in defiance of the Divine Will. This was the state of primeval innocence which *must* have followed the development in man of freedom of choice. . . . His was a childlike condition, childlike in his lack of experience, childlike in his ignorance of wrong-doing, perhaps childlike in his keen spiritual instinct and insight. In glad obedience he found his paradise. . . . Perhaps by some obscure psychical influence, the suggestion was conveyed to man that he should use his new-gotten power in disobedience. . . . Subjected to this temptation to gain a new experience, he (or she) weighs the pros and cons and decides on taking the risks, in venturing on this hitherto untrodden path. The

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fateful and fatal step is taken. Forthwith the drama of creation becomes a tragedy. . . . The state of primeval innocence is now gone for ever. . . . The moral taint is transmitted to offspring. As we all know so well, it is the first false step that tells."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on the Relation between Faith and Reason*,  
p. 78.

## CHAPTER X

### THE NEW TESTAMENT

I HAVE promised you to discuss, in connection with the New Testament, what is called the Higher Criticism, and to begin with, it is largely with this subject we have to deal.

Let us first clear our ideas as to what is meant by Biblical Criticism, and especially by the expression Higher Criticism.

Now the word criticism is not here used in its ordinary sense. When we criticize a lady's dress, we mean that we admire or disapprove its design, material and so on. We say, this is bad because so and so; or this is good because so and so. But you could conceive—could you not?—a study of a dress which does not deal with its merits or demerits at all, but seeks, by a careful study of all its parts, to determine how many years ago it was made, what dressmaker made it, and what influenced her in favour of this particular design.

Well, that is the so-called Higher Criticism

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It makes a close study of internal evidence, *i.e.* style, matter, wording, etc., as to the date and origin of every part of the Bible, assisting itself by external evidence, *i.e.* the words and thought of contemporaries.

By a study of this kind we are able to detect interpolations in the text. Take an example to make clear exactly what is meant. It is agreed by all critics that the Fourth Gospel, taken as a whole, is the work of one hand; its style, its wording, its type of teaching, its matter, are uniform throughout. But there are certain notable passages that are undoubtedly interpolations; among these, in particular, is the story of the woman taken in adultery. I do not mean that this is not part of the original apostolic tradition, but I do mean that it is not written by the same hand that wrote the rest of the Gospel. Let us look at the internal evidence, *i.e.* the evidence derived from the passage itself, "Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives." The "Mount of Olives" is never mentioned elsewhere in this Gospel. "The Scribes and Pharisees"—a term also unknown elsewhere in this Gospel, which uses rather the general term "the Jews." The Scribes, indeed, are not mentioned at all. But the term "Scribes and Pharisees" abounds in the first three

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Gospels. There are other subtle differences in the Greek wording which I need not trouble you with, but which mark out this passage as by another hand. The general tone of the story, too, is alien to that of the Fourth Gospel, but quite in the manner of the first three. Next take the external evidence. The passage is omitted altogether in nearly all the old Greek manuscripts, and does not appear to have been known to some of the Christian writers as late as the fourth century. This case illustrates the sort of thing meant by Biblical Criticism.

Now this is evidently legitimate work which may and ought to be done by men trained and skilled in linguistic and historical work. Only, in order to avoid mistakes, they must enter upon it without personal prepossessions, or at least they must have no regard to personal prepossessions. Thus, a certain school of critics have a preconceived notion as to the sort of person our Lord was, namely, that He was purely human, and whenever in the Gospels He seems to make a higher claim for Himself, they put that down as emanating from others and of later origin. This is not legitimate criticism at all. The results thus attained do not represent the product of painstaking and careful

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scientific work, but the mere prepossessions and prejudices of the worker.

Moreover, to understand anything or anybody, to study any subject satisfactorily we must enter upon such study with a certain degree of sympathy. In this connection, I cannot do better than quote to you the words of our own Sir William Ramsay, a scholar of world-wide reputation, and who, approaching the study of the New Testament, not specially as a Christian, but simply as a classical scholar, has done so much to vindicate its reliability. He says—

“True criticism must be sympathetic; but in investigations into religion, Greek, Roman and Christian alike, there appears to me, if I may say so, to be in many German scholars (the greatest excepted) a lack of that instinctive sympathy with the life and nature of peoples which is essential to the right use of critical processes. . . . In recent years, as I came to understand Roman history better, I have realized that, in the case of almost all the books of the New Testament, it is as gross an outrage on criticism to hold them for second century forgeries, as it would be to class the works of Horace and Virgil as forgeries of the time of Nero.”

Well, now, criticism of this kind must be the



work of experts. But most militant secularists who pose as critics show a profound ignorance of the subject.

Let us take just now one or two examples of this from the secularist who has had most influence on the popular mind in this country, namely Haeckel.

A great many people who have not read Haeckel's books have a certain reverence for him because he is a professor. When we think of a professor, you know, we conjure up in our minds a picture of a venerable old gentleman with spectacles and a long grey beard, who is wrapt up in his books and his specimens, and is above the common foibles of men. But though Haeckel is a Professor of Biology, when he comes to write about religion, he is as vulgar and scurrilous and withal as ignorant as the best of them.

Let us look at some instances of Haeckel's ignorance. He says—

“The most important sources after the Gospels, as is well known, are the fourteen (generally forged) Epistles of the Apostle Paul. The genuine Pauline Epistles (three in number, according to recent criticism—the Romans, Galatians and Corinthians) were all written before the Canonical Gospels.”

There are two points of interest here.

(1) He speaks of the bulk of the Pauline Epistles being forged as in accord with "recent criticism." But the recent criticism of which he speaks is that of the Tübingen school, which had its heyday in the first half of the nineteenth century and has since been thoroughly discredited.

(2) But, more significant still, he speaks of the Epistles to the Romans, Galatians and Corinthians as three in number. Of course, every school-boy knows that there are two Epistles to the Corinthians. It appears, therefore, that Haeckel has never looked at the books he is dealing with, or if he ever did he has forgotten all about them.

If you doubt my estimate of Haeckel, as a critic, let me quote what Harnack, one of the most prominent of living German critics, says about him—

"In themselves the results arrived at (by Haeckel) are simply ridiculous, but accustomed as we are as theologians to study the serious aspect of things, we must not rest content with ridicule. We must strive to learn the lessons that the existence of such wretched fabrications teaches us," and so on.

But Haeckel is not original. He tells us that

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he is chiefly indebted to what he calls "the remarkable work of the learned and acute English theologian, Saladin." In this country we should be surprised to hear this appellation applied to a pamphleteer of the coarse and vulgar type of Saladin. But it is evident he has read Saladin because he copies his blunders—such, for instance, as giving a wrong date for the Council of Nicæa. I should think when Saladin read that description of himself he must have blushed and hung his head and giggled like a silly school-girl.

I have to apologize for this digression, but it was necessary to show the muddy sources from which many secularists derive their knowledge of Biblical criticism.

Let us, then, turn to the consideration of the New Testament in the light of the fairly generally accepted results of modern criticism.

It may be said at once that the type of criticism which made the New Testament consist of productions of the second century is dying or dead. It has, after nearly a century of criticism, fallen back nearly all along the line. Thus let me again quote Harnack, by no means a Christian of the orthodox type, but a critic of great learning and astuteness. He sums up the situation thus—

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“There will come a time, and it is already drawing on, when men will no longer trouble themselves much about the decipherment of literary-historical problems in the domain of primitive Christianity, simply because all that can be made out in this region has already won universal recognition, viz. that, essentially and apart from a few important exceptions, tradition is right.”

He means, of course, by tradition, the views of the date and authorship of the New Testament, which have been generally held in the Christian Church. Remember, please, this quotation when you hear sceptics prating about “the results of the latest criticism.”

There is one secularist argument to which I must here refer, but which will be dismissed rather briefly. It is contended, apart altogether from questions of date and authorship, that the books of the New Testament have not come down to us in anything like their original shape.

I do not think there is really anything in this. Of course, variations have crept into the text with the lapse of centuries, and no two of the ancient manuscripts are exactly and verbally alike. But in so far as this is true of the New Testament, it is equally true of all ancient writings, Greek and Roman alike. Slight

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verbal changes have crept into the texts of Cæsar and Cicero, of Æschylus and Euripides. But no one doubts that they are substantially accurate, or that they give us a correct picture of what they wish to portray. We know, indeed, from classical writers, the Rome of Julius Cæsar almost as well as we know the England of Elizabeth. This all historical writers admit. It would be absurd to maintain that on account of the corruption of the ancient texts we must give up all idea of drawing valid conclusions from the writings. And the same is true of the New Testament. For example, no critic of standing, whatever his view of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel, doubts that that remarkable document has come down to us practically as it was written, or that we have the first three Gospels practically in the form in which they were finally accepted by primitive Christians.

Well, now, the importance of actual results for us lies in this, How far can we to-day obtain a fairly genuine portrait of the original Christ? What manner of man was He? Was He simply a moral teacher of exceptional merit, "a little higher than Confucius and a little lower than Buddha"? Or was He a supernatural figure most truly human at all times, yet clearly

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discerned by those who knew Him best as also superhuman, unearthly, divine? Let us drop all later accretions; let us get as near Him as possible; let us ascertain what His earliest followers actually believed of Him—those who were His relatives, those who knew His childhood and early manhood, those who left all and followed Him, those who were beside Him in His agony, those who stood by His cross. What did they think of Him?

In order to decide this question, let us accept the general results of criticism. I ask you to turn with me to three sources of information—(1) the undoubtedly genuine Pauline Epistles; (2) the first three Gospels—the Synoptic Gospels, as they are called; and (3) the Fourth Gospel. I shall not ask you to go further, because time presses, and because the most modern criticism is coming to be fairly agreed about these documents. Let us consider, first, what is their source and reliability, and, secondly, what they actually say about the Founder of Christianity?

Turn to the Pauline Epistles. Now, the present opinion of critics, taking the most advanced with the most conservative, may pretty well be stated thus—

(1) Practically all critics are agreed that the Epistle to the Hebrews was not written by St. Paul.

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(2) Practically all critics are agreed that Romans, Corinthians and Galatians were undoubtedly written by him. It is true there is a small group of wild speculators of the school of Van Manen—mostly Dutch or French—who deny their genuineness; but it is unquestionable that the vast majority accept them as genuine. We have seen that even poor Haeckel takes this view.

(3) Many critics dispute the genuineness of the pastoral epistles, *i. e.* those to Timothy and Titus.

(4) The remainder, though largely accepted, are denied by some.

In order to give the fullest advantage to opponents, we shall deal only with the admittedly genuine Epistles.

These are the earliest writings in the New Testament. They are, as Mr. Welch puts it, "some old letters of a contemporary of Christ." Their author is a Jew of high education and intelligence. He no doubt lived partly in Judæa during the lifetime of Christ, though he was certainly not acquainted with Him.

He mentions, in Galatians, that he had been converted to Christianity many years before. At what date may this conversion have been—that is, how long after the crucifixion? Harnack

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and others put the date of the crucifixion at 29 A.D. and the date of Paul's conversion about 30 A.D. Well, he tells us in the same Epistle that after his conversion he spent some time in Arabia, and then returned to Damascus. Three years afterwards—say, roughly, about 34 or 35—he went up to Jerusalem to confer with Peter. So we see he was converted very soon after the crucifixion, and had an opportunity of comparing ideas with the other apostles about half-a-dozen years after that event.

If, then, we may take these Epistles as representing St. Paul's early view of Christianity—and we have no reason whatever for supposing that he changed his view—we are very, very near to the fountain-head, and may expect, therefore, to find a true picture of Christ's Personality; for though St. Paul knew Him not in the flesh, he was on intimate terms with those who did. Here, then, if Rationalist views are right, we should expect to find a Christ cleared of ecclesiastical rubbish, free from mystery and supernaturalism—a mere man, but great and good, like Paul himself.

Let us look for Him, then. Take the opening passage of the first Epistle, and you have words which strike the keynote of the Christology of them all—



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"Concerning His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord . . . declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

Here, surely, is no mere man, but a supernatural and divine Personality.

The same note runs through all these Epistles—

"They would not have crucified the Lord of Glory."

"Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?"

Further, though he had not known Christ in the flesh, he declares that He had been supernaturally revealed to him—

"Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"

He implies that Christ pre-existed before His earthly life—

"Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor."

He associates Christ's name with that of the Father and the Holy Spirit in the threefold benediction—

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the

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love of God and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all."

He declares that Christ is the final judge of mankind—

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

Finally, he speaks of Christ as God—

"Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever."

Thus, you see, if we go for our portrait of Christ to the earliest records of all, and these admittedly genuine, we find no mere human figure, but a Divine Christ, risen and glorified. ]

But was this only St. Paul's private view? Did he make Christianity? No; that is not possible. For the apostle draws a clear enough picture of the primitive Church, and it is evident that then, as now, Christians differed from one another with very sharp contention. Like most strong men, he seems to have borne opposition rather badly, and he tells us a great deal about it; but there is not the slightest hint that those who had been the companions of Christ's earthly life raised any protest against his too high view of Christ's Person. The idea of an Incarnation, or of divine honours being paid to any human personage, was most repugnant to the prejudices of a pious Jew, and more so at that particular

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period than at any other. Yet there is not a whisper of any objection from Jewish Christians to St. Paul's presentation of Christ as "over all, God blessed for ever." On the contrary, he distinctly tells us that Peter, John and James, whom he describes as "the Lord's brother," gave him the right hand of fellowship, and that he taught with their concurrence.

It is evident, therefore, that the Pauline Christology was the accepted teaching of the Christian Church almost immediately after Pentecost.

Let us, then, turn to the Synoptic Gospels, *i. e.* the first three, Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The date of these cannot be accurately fixed. It was the custom of the advanced critics of fifty years ago to relegate them to the second century. But now their date has been pushed backwards, and the general view is that they are of the first century. More than this we cannot definitely say. Harnack puts the date as follows: Mark 65-70, Matthew 70-75, Luke 78-93. They do not profess to be the work of eye-witnesses. We have the bald, direct, unpolished, notebook-like Gospel according to St. Mark. St. Matthew is less abrupt and fuller. The third Gospel was evidently written by a man of high education. Its style and language are

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more polished than those of the other two. The writer possesses a remarkable power of telling a story in a beautiful and interesting way. The first chapter of St. Luke is, indeed, the finest example of beautiful narrative writing to be found in any literature. Of these three St. Mark is generally recognized as the earliest. They are held to have been compiled either from earlier documents or from oral tradition, carefully preserved, perhaps, by recitation in the services of the Church. They are the earliest accounts of the actual life of Christ that have come down to us.

It is not necessary to deal at any great length with their contents. Here, again, we look in vain for any merely human Christ. His birth (the account of it is given in two of them, one account apparently derived from His foster-father, the other from His mother) is miraculous, heralded by angel messengers, and accompanied by wonderful attendant circumstances. As an infant He is adored by shepherds and by sages. Winds and waves obey Him. He heals the sick and raises the dead. His language is language of majestic, of sublime egotism, which in a mere man would be affectation. "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the

Son." "The Son of man is lord also of the Sabbath." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." "The Son of man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him." He is transfigured before His three disciples, blazing with outward splendour, holding converse with departed saints. The whole narrative is steeped in miracle. At His death the veil of the temple is rent in twain, the rocks are rent and the graves opened. He Himself rises triumphantly from the tomb.

Whether rightly or wrongly, then, these earliest narratives regarded Him as more than man. The Sermon on the Mount is much affected by Rationalists. But even there you are face to face with Christ as the final Judge. "Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me ye that work iniquity."

The question of the authorship of the Fourth Gospel is one round which a tremendously keen contest has been waged. It is undoubtedly the latest of the Gospels, and formerly among German critics it was generally considered to have been written well on in the second century.

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Latterly there has been a remarkable reaction in favour of the view that the Gospel was really written by the Apostle John. This view had been held all along by the more conservative critics. Westcott's classical argument in favour of the authenticity of this Gospel is a masterpiece of close reasoning. He shows step by step from a careful examination and analysis of the Gospel itself (1) that the author must have been a Jew, (2) that he must have been a Jew of Palestine, (3) that he was an eye-witness, (4) that he was an apostle, and (5) that, all this being accepted, he could be no other than the Apostle John. The subject is a most fascinating one, of supreme interest and importance, but time would utterly fail me if I were to attempt even an outline of the arguments adduced on either side.

I confine myself to one indication of the trend of modern criticism. Dr. Drummond has declared definitely, in his elaborate and learned work recently published, in favour of the Johannean authorship, *i. e.* that St. John was the writer. Now, what makes his evidence of especial value is that he is a Unitarian, Principal of Manchester College, the leading Unitarian educational institution in this country. Whatever the Fourth Gospel may be, it is certainly not Unitarian,

and it shows great courage and fairness on Dr. Drummond's part to decide as he has done. It is, as it were, an indication of the collapse of the destructive criticism. He sums up his conclusion thus—

“The external evidence . . . is all on one side, and for my part I cannot easily repel its force. A considerable mass of internal evidence is in harmony with the external. . . . On weighing the arguments for and against to the best of my power, I must give my own judgment in favour of the Johannine authorship.”

This yields everything a Christian could wish on behalf of the Gospel. If Dr. Drummond's view is sound, we are in possession of the evidence of one who was himself, not only a follower of our Lord and an eye-witness of the chief incidents of His life, but the closest, dearest, most intimate of all His associates.

Here, then, if the Rationalist view of Christ is correct, we ought surely to find the merely human Christ, the great and good man, but man only. On the contrary, the Christology of the Fourth Gospel is the highest of all. On this point it will be sufficient if I quote to you the words of Martineau. I do this partly because he is a Unitarian, and therefore not likely to exaggerate on this question, but chiefly

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because his language is more beautiful and graphic than anything I could attempt. This is Martineau's view of the Christology of the Fourth Gospel—

“The point of departure is no longer (as in Matthew and Luke) the home of the Nativity, or (as in Mark) the baptism in the Jordan, or (as with Paul) the death on the cross, or anything else that lies in history. The story opens in quite another field of time indefinitely prior, not only to the life of Jesus, but to the creation of the visible universe itself; it plants us amid the silent eternity ere yet there was anything but God. There, as its beginning, it introduces us to an interior view of the divine life and shows it not to be an absolute solitude, but a relation between two varieties of spiritual Being: one, the infinite and unapproachable essence, for ever hid from all inferior apprehension; the other, the explicit thought and manifesting Word who is like Him as Son to Father, and may be the organ of breaking the ancient silence and putting forth a universe to take His invisibility away. This is the scene—if such we can call that transcendent retreat—on which the curtain of the drama rises; and this associate of God, before all worlds, is the personage whose history it purposes to exhibit with at least the



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moral unity which never changes place or time except to link together the beginning, the middle, and the consummation of an eternal purpose. Two stages of activity are spread for him as the steps by which he passes to the central incident of his existence ; He called up the natural cosmos, to hint by a finite sign how much behind could not be signified ; and he came, in transient visits of revelation and prophecy to the people who, as the channels of promise, were more especially 'his own.' But to be this Divine Agent for Nature and Divine Agent for History, could not accomplish his supreme end ; and, to realize this at last, He assumed our humanity, became incarnate in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, and, after tarrying among men for a while as the visible impersonation of the infinite 'grace and truth,' returned to the 'bosom of the Father' whence he came ; not, however, without sending the Holy Spirit to take his place below, to continue His work, and blend into one organism the children of God in both worlds. From this mere outline it is evident that here we have the story, not of ascending humanity, but of descending Divinity, of a God entering into the disguise of an earthly life, and, when the mantle has fallen, resuming his home on high. The

movement of the writer's thought is from above downwards, its range from the beginning to the end of time, and his interest in the biography he follows out is not so much in the human incidents and experiences, which only mask the reality, as in the vestiges of irrepressible glory which escaped in gleams with every gust that stirred the robe of his humility."

Now, in the light of what the Unitarian Dr. Drummond has proved regarding the authorship of this Gospel, we have to remember that this is the teaching of one who not only knew our Lord intimately from at least the commencement of His public ministry, but who was the closest, the dearest of His personal friends and companions. Dr. Drummond, indeed, attempts the argument that even although he was an eye-witness, and although he was a man of far too great a spiritual character to be a wilful deceiver, that yet his later idealization of Christ has blurred his recollections of the Master. But we cannot admit this for a moment. The narrative lives and glows with a vivid reality. It is he who remembers dates and days and names; who can tell what particular disciple said a particular thing; who hits off the character of his fellow-disciples (witness Nathaniel and Thomas) with a few masterly strokes; who

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recalls all the little unimportant details. His pages abound with little touches indicating that he is speaking from personal recollection, for he constantly mentions minute points which have no real bearing on the narrative. Examples are too numerous to mention; one or two will suffice.

Look at the end of the first and beginning of the second chapter, and you find a remarkable consecutiveness and circumstantiality about names, days, and even hours.

“The next day John seeth Jesus.”

“Again the next day after.”

“They came and saw where He dwelt and abode with Him that day; for it was about the tenth hour.”

“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee.”

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee.”

Or take the extraordinary statement—

“After this He went down to Capernaum, He and His mother, and His brethren, and His disciples”—and what did they do there? Nothing—“they continued there not many days.” No one who was not writing from personal recollection would have dreamt of inserting such a purposeless statement.

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Jesus sat by "the well: and it was about the sixth hour."

Narrating the story of the five barley loaves and two small fishes he remembers that "there was much grass in the place."

In the storm on the sea of Galilee, the disciples "had rowed about five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs."

He recalls that the night before the crucifixion was cold.

On the resurrection morning the writer entered, after Peter, into the sepulchre. He particularly remembers that the napkin that had been about Jesus' head was "not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."

All these little irrelevant details are just what we should expect from an old man, with a good memory, writing of his youth. You may say that they are introduced to give verisimilitude to the narrative. That is the sort of thing which modern novelists often excel in. But I do not think that any classical scholar will disagree with me when I say that the system of working in irrelevant details in this way is an art entirely wanting in ancient narrative literature. In fact, fiction was among the ancients a very poor and crude affair, compared to what it is among us.

Nay, this feature indicates that the events of the great three years had burned themselves into the apostle's heart and memory. These were the years when he had really lived, for then that dear Presence had been ever and visibly with him. We cannot, then, say with Dr. Drummond that the apostle was mistaken in his recollections of Christ. Even although he lived to an extreme old age, and so formed a link between the apostolic college and the Catholic Church of history, yet we cannot doubt that he clung clearly and accurately to the fond memories of a wonderful past. In short, we cannot doubt that he who lay on Jesus' breast at supper is a better judge of what Jesus really was than is Dr. Drummond.

Now, in all this, my object has been to vindicate a divine and miraculous Christ. I have shown you that the figure of a Jesus who was merely a great moral teacher is not to be found in history. I have scanned the indisputably genuine Pauline Epistles, and from them have shown that the Church within a very few years of Pentecost understood His personality as superhuman. We have searched the Synoptic Gospels, which are the earliest written record of His life, and there too we have found the whole narrative steeped in the supernatural.

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And you must remember, what I might have mentioned before, that this supernatural element being common to all three, and often expressed in almost identical language, must have existed—and all critics are agreed in this—in the earlier records from which they all drew. We are thus pushed back necessarily many decades, before the earliest Gospel was written. Lastly, we have scrutinized the Fourth Gospel, which the most eminent of Unitarian critics to-day has pronounced the work of the Apostle John, an eye-witness, and the beloved disciple. There, too, as emphatically affirmed by the Unitarian Martineau, we find a Divine Figure upon the stage. All this shows that the merely human Christ has no existence except in the imagination of the modern rationalist.

But there are some who will reply, "I don't care the snap of a finger for your criticism when it leads to results such as these. If the narratives are, as on your own showing they are, miraculous in tone, then that fact in itself shows them to be utterly unreliable—puts them out of court altogether." This leads us, therefore, naturally to a few words on the credibility of miracles.

## CHAPTER XI

### ARE MIRACLES CREDIBLE?

THIS is a most difficult subject to address an audience on, which, I have to suppose, is largely, or at least partly, hostile. It is hopeless to go to one who has not first come to the conclusion that Christianity is divine, and to ask him to accept the miracles of the Bible on their own evidential footing. There was a time, no doubt, as among his contemporaries, when the miracles were evidence of Christ, but *now* it has come to pass, and necessarily so, that it is rather Christ who is evidence of the miracles. I even admit fully that the miraculous may be naturally enough to your minds a positive difficulty, at the present stage. In my last chapter, when I come to speak of the positive claims of Christianity, I shall endeavour to show you why Christianity demands your allegiance, with all it implies—at once its central Figure and all that emanates from and is involved in His Incarnation. When I have convinced you of this I

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shall be in a better position to show you just exactly why we accept miracles with the rest.

But meantime I take lower ground. I address myself merely to this question : assuming the Incarnation—that the Infinite God has deigned to appear upon the stage of time, to place Himself under the limitations of the finite, to tabernacle among us, and to speak to us in the likeness of sinful flesh—is it inherently absurd to suppose this Incarnation to be accompanied by outward miracle ?

Now, in this connection, I must recall to your minds what I said on the subject of prayer.

You tell me that nature works by law—law uniform and defined. Well, but by Natural Law we simply mean the principle that what has happened once will happen again, the antecedents remaining the same. If the antecedents, by which I mean the preceding and attendant circumstances, are different, then the result will be different. If I add a solution of common salt to a solution of nitrate of silver, a chemical reaction will take place and chloride of silver will be precipitated in visible form. If I add some other reagent instead of common salt, the reaction will be different and, it may be, another kind of precipitate will be formed. If the attendant circumstances are entirely un-



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precedented, the event also may be entirely unprecedented. If I add to nitrate of silver a reagent never before described or used, something may happen which goes clean against all previous experiences and surprises me into exclaiming that something like a miracle has taken place. At the Incarnation, a new thing happened that had never happened before and has never happened since, a thing of stupendous importance and interest if true, namely, that "the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us." Under these unique circumstances, is it irrational to suppose that the results too should be unique—miraculous? that, as Martineau says, "the vestiges of irrepressible glory escaped in gleams with every gust that stirred the robe of His humility"?

That is my first point. My second is this—that what we call miracles are a concession to spiritual, moral, and intellectual weakness, like that of imperfect development. It is remarkable that our Lord often speaks somewhat slightly of His own miracles. "A faithless and perverse generation seeketh after a sign." "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me (*i.e.* seen and touched My risen body) thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet

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have believed (*i.e.* blessed are they that accept Me for Myself and need no miracle to convince).” In our weakness we are constantly falling back on the old idea of Deism, as if God were outside the visible universe, and only touched it by occasional wonder-working. But God is in every event; He underlies every law, and His Providence works through it as well as through the apparent exception. I should like to quote on this point the words of a great preacher who is also an expert in science. Father Waggett says—

“There is an infant apologetic which seeks for the proof of Divine government of the world in the interstices of natural order, which offers for the grounds of faith the imperfections of science, which says, ‘You cannot account for this; therefore God did it.’ Supposing you could account for it, do you not equally think that God did it? A story in Carlyle’s *John Sterling* illustrates this. John Sterling was in his house in the Bahamas. The wind blew violently, and at last the roof blew off, and John Sterling says, ‘We then felt that we were in God’s hands.’ While the roof stood firm, you see, they felt that there was something between them and God; but when the roof falls we must fall back on God. That is the attitude of

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mind which produces the infant apologetic—the apologetic which sees the evidences of Divine Power in the absence of natural law. It is a state true in its measure and time, and when men are in that state God gives them the proof that they can take. . . . He allows Elisha to send his staff to lay upon the child, and then presently to set his body mouth to mouth with the dead and raise him to life. He breaks through our unbelief. He shocks our brutal blindness. . . . But in that temper of infantile spirituality there lurks a danger of materialism, there lurks a profound conviction that what is not interrupted is not of God. If the doctor healed their child, they would give no thanks to God. So God, to meet their blindness and unbelief, has to dispense with the means; so that He may catch them where they are, meet them on the narrow path of their delusion. This is not an evil state of thought—this is only an early state of thought . . . which ought to grow to claim the whole field of what are called means.”

## CHAPTER XII

### DID CHRIST RISE FROM THE DEAD?

I HAD originally intended to take up and consider some of the leading Christian principles not yet specially dealt with. But I think that the defence of such doctrines as the Incarnation and Atonement has been implied in much that I have already said, or will be in my next and concluding chapter. I shall therefore conclude my defence by a discussion only of the doctrine of the Resurrection of our Lord.

Let me at once dispose of a curious argument adduced in connection with this matter. It cannot be contended, it is said, that there is any evidence for the Resurrection, because there is no evidence that could be accepted as such by any modern law court.

This is mere clever trifling. Our courts of law and their rules of evidence were not designed to deal with events alleged to have taken place centuries ago, and they would utterly break down in their working if they attempted to do

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so. The character of Mary Queen of Scots is one of the most disputed in history. Now suppose that for some reason the question were raised in a modern court of law as to whether Mary was art and part in the murder of her second husband, Lord Darnley. In such circumstances, adhering to the conventional rules of evidence, the court would have to dismiss the case on the ground that there was no evidence that Darnley had been killed at all, or indeed that he ever lived. Were it necessary legally to decide such a distant historical question Parliament would have to constitute a special tribunal and lay down special directions, allowing evidence which would not otherwise be legally evidence at all. But I do not believe that this argument is even intended to be taken seriously.

I want, before going on to the direct evidence for the Resurrection, to address myself to a preliminary point. I want to prove to you that a belief that Jesus had risen from the dead was universally held by the earliest Christians immediately after the alleged event. Clearly understand that that is all I set out to prove in the first instance, namely—I repeat it again—that a belief that Jesus had risen from the dead was universally held by the

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earliest Christians immediately after the alleged event.

In my last chapter I showed that if we go to the undeniably genuine Pauline Epistles, we must come to the conclusion that the earliest Christians held Christ as Divine. Now exactly the same reasoning applies to the Resurrection.

For St. Paul everywhere states the Resurrection of Christ as the corner-stone of the whole edifice of faith.

He is "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead."

"Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over Him."

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

"I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures. And that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve. After that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that He

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was seen of James, then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of me also."

"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

All this, you see, he assumes, not as something new, but as what they would all accept as a matter of course, having been received from the beginning. He refers to St. Peter under the name of Cephas, and we know from what I have already shown you that Peter was in accord with his teaching.

Among the points common to all three Synoptics (*i. e.* first three Gospels) is the Resurrection. It must therefore have been a part of the earliest tradition from which they all three drew.

In the Fourth Gospel we have the testimony of an eye-witness who actually entered the empty tomb.

Professor Milligan further adduces as evidence of the universal early belief, the substitution of the first day of the week, *i. e.* the weekly commemoration of the Resurrection, for the Jewish sabbath—a change of which traces appear a week after the alleged event itself; also the institution of Easter as the earliest and chief of Christian festivals.

It is then evident—and this is all I am mean-

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time contending for—that a belief in the Resurrection was universal and undisputed among the very earliest Christians.

That being so, it is clearly not a myth. I do not mean by this that it is necessarily true. All I mean is, that it was not a fable, which gradually took form as the Person of Jesus was idealized in the haze of distance. Myths such as this take time to develop, and I repeat that the story of the Resurrection cannot be a myth in that sense—the time available is not sufficient.

If, then, this was the universal belief of the first disciples, those who deny its truth are shut up to one of two conclusions. Either they lied, or they were mistaken.

(1) Did they then lie? Were they wilful deceivers? It is most difficult to suppose this. Men do not die for a lie. They had nothing to gain by the story. Yet in testimony of its truth they went unflinchingly to the doom of martyrdom, and this although they do not appear to have been, prior to the Resurrection, men of impressive courage. It has indeed been said, and said justly, that the mere fact of their martyrdom does not prove the Resurrection to be true. No, but it does prove that they were not wilful deceivers.



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Moreover, notice this further difficulty about the theory of wilful deception. Before the crucifixion, one of the apostles was found willing to sell his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Now, if the whole apostolic band had been men of the stuff of which liars and swindlers are made, surely one of them might have found a purchaser, pocketed his price and—to use a vulgar but expressive phrase—given the whole show away. But nothing of the kind took place, nor could it have taken place without shattering the infant Church to atoms.

We may put aside, then, the theory that the story of the Resurrection was a wilful deception.

(2) But were they then mistaken?

One amazing theory has been advanced to explain the mistake.

It has been suggested that our Lord did not die on the cross at all, but only swooned, and He having been placed in a tomb, the coolness revived Him. One point mentioned in favour of this theory is that when the soldier pierced His side there came forth blood and water. Now blood, it is said, does not flow from a corpse, therefore He must have been alive at that moment, although the Evangelist expressly states that He was dead. Well, it is quite true that blood does not spurt freely from a wound

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in a corpse, but the right side of the heart is usually more or less full of blood after death, as, indeed, is the whole venous system. And if the right ventricle were transfixed by a sharp blade, I should have great difficulty in believing that, on its withdrawal, no stain of blood would appear externally. And, further, I should have still greater difficulty in supposing that a person subjected to such treatment could revive and appear three days afterwards, apparently in full health, being indeed able to walk several miles. I should regard this as quite as great a miracle as the Resurrection itself.

Again, observe that a condition of prolonged unconsciousness, such as that suggests, must have been an ordinary faint, due, that is to say, to a failure of the heart's action. That is the only kind of unconsciousness which could be expected to follow from severe pain and hemorrhage. Such a nervous phenomenon as trance—a recognized hysterical condition—may be put aside as extremely unlikely to result from suffering and bleeding, and, in any case, as practically impossible of occurrence in a healthy male adult of early middle age. We are therefore shut up to a faint. Now I venture to say that a faint of such a character must be either brief or fatal. A faint of this kind, lasting from

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Friday to Sunday, is a form of faint unknown to medical science.

A still stronger point is this. If our Lord did not die on the cross, what became of Him afterwards? He disappears from human view—with a few eccentric exceptions—and allows His apostles to found a Church in His absence, whose existence is based upon a misconception, and which yet grew and prospered everywhere. Yet He effaces Himself entirely, and leaves them to fight their mistaken but triumphant battle alone. Hidden away in some obscure spot—He whom the multitudes knew so well—unrecognized, unknown, He looks on at the drama of the infant Church, presumably with no little amusement, and ultimately dies secretly, leaving not a trace nor a legend behind Him. The supposition is simply childish.

Equally absurd is the argument we have recently seen advanced against the truth of the Resurrection on the ground that nobody had actually seen it occur. Surely, if He were actually dead, and were seen alive again, that would be enough. Suppose you saw a friend off by train on Saturday to spend a week-end in the country, and suppose he changed his mind, for some reason, and walked back without telling any one, presenting himself to your

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astonished vision on the Sunday afternoon, would you say—

“It cannot be you at all, for I saw you off yesterday”?

“But I have come back.”

“How do I know that? Nobody saw you come.”

“Well, I am here now, anyhow.”

“But in the absence of actual observation of your return, the mere fact that you are here is quite inconclusive.”

I suppose your friend would think you only fit for Bedlam. Yet that is what this argument amounts to.

If we are satisfied that our Lord died on the cross, there is only one other supposition to explain the disciples' illusion, namely, that the supposed appearances were subjective visions based on a disordered imagination. People, we know, have often imagined that they saw ghosts when there was really nothing to see. This, it is said, was a case of that kind.

Morbid visions, delusive visions always come, as Milligan points out, to men in a state of high mental tension, in a condition of watchfulness and expectancy. But there appears to have been no such feeling on the part of the little community at that time. Their condition was

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rather one of depression and fear. The crucifixion had been the shipwreck of all their hopes. They had hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel. They had nearly all forsaken Him except, apparently, the beloved disciple and a few faithful women. And although their love and fidelity had to some extent reasserted themselves, the terrible tragedy of Calvary had still left them stunned. They shut themselves up for fear of the Jews. So far were they from expecting a vision that, in some cases, they seem to have failed to recognize Him.

Moreover, the visions themselves cease altogether after a short space of time. Yet, if we think of it, the mental condition of the disciples after Pentecost was much more favourable to the development of visions. It was the general expectation that He would return to earth during their lifetime. And yet no vision comes to answer the eager expectation.

Again, it cannot be contended that the appearances were confined to friends—to whom alone the ghost theory would be applicable. For He appeared to one of His bitterest enemies, Saul of Tarsus, himself a persecutor of the Church, and apparently at the very moment of this appearance engaged in an act of persecution. So vivid and unmistakable is the

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appearance that the persecutor immediately becomes a disciple.

In one of his undoubtedly genuine epistles, too, St. Paul tells us that the Risen Lord appeared to more than five hundred brethren at once. Certainly such an appearance does not square with the idea of an hysterical ghostly vision, and, unless well authenticated, it was hardly one which the apostle would have referred to as not a matter of dispute, if, as he states, the greater number of those present were still alive, any one of whom could have given the lie to the story.

Nor are the slight discrepancies to be found in the narratives conclusive against their truth. On the contrary, they are in its favour. It is only on what I have called the Koran view of the Bible that they need constitute any difficulty. Any one familiar with the study of evidence knows how impossible it is to get an absolutely and entirely identical account of what took place at a moment of excitement. Ask half-a-dozen witnesses to describe, for example, a street accident, and probably no two of them will agree in every point of detail. So far are the discrepancies from discrediting the narratives—that if indeed they are not merely apparent—that they positively confirm their truth, as indicating

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that the writers were not in collusion, were not engaged in a conspiracy to deceive.

To sum up, then. I have shown you that a belief in the Resurrection was universal and undisputed among the first disciples. This proves that it could not have grown as myths grow round any great personality ; there was not time for such a development. It follows, then, if we deny the fact, that these disciples were either all wilful deceivers, or else mistaken. The first hypothesis is, in the face of facts, impossible. The second seems, all things considered, extremely improbable.

Thus we are driven to the conclusion that, stupendous as was the miracle, yet, the circumstances which led up to it being also stupendous, it is not incredible. On the contrary, if, as Huxley argues, the occurrence of miracles is simply a question of evidence, we are justified in saying that the Resurrection of Christ is as well attested as are most of the facts of ancient history.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE POSITIVE CLAIMS OF CHRISTIANITY

I HAVE, hitherto, stood on the defensive. I have attempted to deal with the more important sceptical arguments in a direct and inevasive manner. But I quite recognize that this defensive or negative method of replying to objections cannot, as a rule, carry conviction to any man's mind of the truth of Christianity. At most, I may have perhaps given pause to some who on account of these objections were on the point of reluctantly dropping their faith, or I may have cleared a few obstacles from the path of those whose feet were turned towards the way of peace. Sometimes you may have thought that my arguments were somewhat feeble, sometimes you may have thought that I made rather a good point. But the claims of Christianity upon the human heart are of infinitely wider scope, and rest on infinitely stronger grounds than dialectic of this kind. It is a most true remark of one of the Fathers that it has not pleased God to



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save His people by logic. I have shown you that the current objections stated to Christianity are by no means insuperable. But I have not told you why we believe it.

Has this thought ever struck you in listening to a Christian on his religion?—I know it has often struck me. Here is a man of education and intelligence—perhaps a scientific expert, like George J. Romanes ; perhaps a philosopher, like John Henry Newman ; perhaps a powerful and brilliant man of action, like William Ewart Gladstone—who is sane on all ordinary topics, but who, when it comes to religion, swallows unhesitatingly and with avidity a number of seemingly old wives' fables. How does it come about? What is the explanation? How can such an one believe in the Incarnation and the Atonement, or, to touch still greater depths of childishness, the Church and the Sacraments? Well, it is a strange, it is a wonderful thing, is it not? But does it not seem to you that there must be some rational answer, that the man is not such a fool as he appears? Do you not feel that while he answers your arguments, or tries to do so with perhaps only indifferent success, his soul is really elsewhere, his faith is based on something hidden away in the recesses of intimate personal knowledge and experience,

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about which nothing whatever has been said in the course of your conversation?

It is to this question I now address myself. I am going to try to tell you—it is not an easy thing—just why we believe. I have written on this subject already, and much that I have now to say will be on the lines of what I have written. You will excuse this, as I should have great difficulty in radically remodelling my expression of the ideas I have elsewhere put forward.

Let me premise this, that we have valid ground for believing. It would be a mere waste of my time and yours to talk about the matter if it were not so. As John Stuart Mill well says somewhere, for a man to assert strenuously that he believes a thing, does not in the least help me to believe it unless he supplies me with evidence in support of his belief. I am not to insult your intelligence by asking you to believe something on insufficient evidence. To do so would be to commit mental suicide. Faith, whatever it means, does not mean the acceptance of statements in the absence of evidence.

It may seem that here I am in conflict with other apologists. Some of them say we accept this or that, not on evidence, but on authority. The difference is in words, not in reality. I believe that such a country as Australia exists,

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not because I have seen it, for I have not, but on the authority of others. But I must, first of all, be satisfied on my own accord by valid evidence that the authority is reliable.

Let us consider, then, the means by which we arrive at any truth. In my opinion there is only one method, and that the scientific method. This consists ordinarily of two parts, (1) observation, including, if necessary, experiment, and (2) reasoning on the facts observed. On this definition of the scientific method, there is no other way of acquiring knowledge. There are, indeed, some simple forms of knowledge which are acquired by observation alone and where the act of reasoning is not required in order to arrive at a conclusion. Thus, if I smell an agreeable odour, the mere fact of my observation completely fulfils all that is necessary for a knowledge of the odour—no reasoning comes in at all. But in the vast majority of cases, in coming to any conclusion I reason on certain phenomena which I have previously observed either in the outer world or in my own inner self—in my mind. Thus many cases which you might take to be simply cases of observation, really involve reasoning. If I look out of the window and see a man standing in the street, you might regard that as simply a case of

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observation, but it is not so. Much reasoning is involved in my conclusion that a man is really there. I need not explain to you how this is so, you may take it from me that all psychologists and all physiologists are agreed that it is so.

Thus, when some writers instance cases where they imagine we draw conclusions by other means than the scientific method of observation and reasoning, they are, I think, mistaken. When a child trusts its mother's love and refuses, in the face of any amount of argument, to give up that trust, we are told that its intuition is beyond and above reason and is comparable with Faith. But the child has really observed certain facts about its mother, which have, hitherto, universally held good, and it unconsciously reasons from past to future, on the principle of the uniformity of nature.

Now the observations on which we draw conclusions as to the truth of Christianity are chiefly made upon ourselves, upon our own appetites, affections, instincts, and so on. I therefore direct your attention, first, to a brief study of some points about our own nature.

I want you to observe that a large part of our nature is simply animal—that is to say, we have it in common with the lower creatures—but a

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certain part is peculiarly human, that is, it is possessed by us but not by them.

To begin with, then, let us turn first to the animal instincts. They are seen in their purest form among the lower animals, where they are uninterfered with by human intelligence and will.

How simple and direct and effective are these animal instincts, hunger, sex, love of offspring, fear, anger, and so on. They know their goal and make directly and surely for it. In the case of the less intelligent, they seem to rule the animal rather successively than simultaneously. Each in turn is irresistible and drives the agent forward to its goal. Thereafter the emotional nature is quiescent till presently another instinct seizes the reins of power, and in turn attains its satisfaction.

I want you particularly to notice that each of these animal instincts pursues a reality. In the lower, but joyous fields of pure animality, there are no dream visions to mock and elude. It is conceivable, of course, though contrary to the received principles of natural selection, that an instinct should be developed which should drive an animal to pursue something that has no existence; but so inconsistent is this, with all our experience of animal life, that the mere

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statement of it is almost absurd. Unless there were such a thing as food, there could be no such appetite as hunger. Fear could not exist in a world free from all danger. Imagine a creature getting perpetually into a rage in a solitary state of existence, where there is nobody to be angry with and nothing to be angry about. The mere idea is almost nonsense.

This is, of course, a general law of nature, which applies to organs as well as instincts. They cannot take their rise except for some real definite purpose, which has a direct relationship to external real conditions, and is fitted to them as the key is fitted to the lock. All Nature's most beautiful organic forms are correlated to external realities. The tender green of the leaf, the branching beauty of oak and beech, the strong, rich curves of every animal frame, the shapeliness of all Nature's compositions and the gracious perfection of all her colour schemes—all these are moulded with complete fitness to the realities of that universe in which they live and move and have their being. The skilled biologist, it is said, when shown merely the fossilized limb of an extinct animal, can reconstruct the whole animal with approximate accuracy from the inspection of that one

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portion, and I suppose that if our intelligence were perfect in its working, and we had an absolutely complete knowledge of just one plant or animal, we should be able to build up an accurate knowledge of the whole of nature, in so far as it has any relation to that plant or animal.

“Flower in the crannied wall,  
I pluck you out of the crannies ;  
I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,  
Little flower—but *if* I could understand  
What you are, root and all, and all in all,  
I should know what God and man is.”

That, then, is the main thing I want you to realize in reference to the animal instincts—that they always pursue a reality. It is of extreme importance to us, as you will presently see, and I ask you to carry it along with you as we proceed.

Well, now, if we have grasped this simple principle about animal instinct, let us turn to human nature. Here a great and overwhelming surprise awaits us. Man, it is true, is an animal, and all that his humbler fellows possess in the way of instinct he, too, possesses, although the situation is complicated by his intelligence and free-will. But we possess, in addition, a number of instincts which they have not. And if

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we look at all these peculiarly human instincts we find that instead of being related to some external, tangible reality, they seem to seek fruitlessly for a goal they never reach. To these higher desires and longings, Nature appears to provide no full outlet. Morals, Art, Religion, these all reach out towards intangible ideas which we are incapable of even definitely picturing to ourselves. Hence all our higher instincts seem to lose themselves in a perpetual labyrinthine maze of disappointment. We thirst, we long, we dream, but we never touch or realize. "Man walketh in a vain shadow and disquieteth himself in vain."

Yet while this sense of frustration and illusion makes man's higher aspirations as much a source of pain as of pleasure to him, yet he continually crowns them with honour and dignity as the highest part of him. For how does a man differ from an ox or a horse? If you give a horse water enough to drink and food enough to eat, if his simple animal cravings are fully satisfied, he has all he needs; he asks no more. To these, God's beautiful lower creatures, the soft breath of spring, the warmth of the balmy summer air, the richness of the sweet meadow grass, the companionship of mate and offspring—these complete the balance of need



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and attainment. But man's nature is always off its balance seeking for the satisfaction of desires to which Nature appears, at first sight, to afford no full gratification.

Let me show you briefly that this is true.

Take the æsthetic sense, the sense of beauty. We find in external nature our highest known beauty. The rotation of the seasons—spring with her unaccustomed sunshine, her first bright splashes of colour by the wayside, her golden gorse, her childish laughter and easy tears; summer with her wealth of full and vigorous life, her luxuriance of verdure and blossom, her greens and her yellows and her scarlets, dying away in the hot quivering haze of distance into purple mystery, even her angry moods when her frowns gather in inky cloud presently to burst in the thunderclap and the lightning flash; autumn breathing her golden breath on meadow and woodland, till they glow again with a glory ineffable even in decay; winter, whose early frost sprinkles dead grass and withered leaves with crystal and silver, whose snowy sheen covers all nature with a shroud of dazzling brilliance; even the sad rain and mist that hide from us far and near with wonderful atmospheric effects of glory and of gloom—all these are indeed lovely in our eyes,

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and nothing that we can imagine or picture can surpass them, yet they leave us still unsatisfied, sadly pensive, full of "thoughts that do lie too deep for tears." They are but the outward garment that hides the reality within. Just in proportion as we know and love them will they seem to elude us and to fall off from our longing reach. In the midst of all the change and flux, the sunshine chasing the shadow, the gorgeous procession of life and growth of love and death, the heart of man, in its highest mood, rests not in these, but pants for the unchanging, the transcendental, the eternal.

Take imitative art. It is a truism to say that the highest artistic production fails to satisfy the idea of its creator. We wonder at the marvellous insight, the unerring technique of the great sculptor or painter; but ask him what he thinks about it, and he will ever tell you that he has failed fully to express his meaning, that his artistic imagination leads him on and then leaves him mocked and baffled.

Take morality. Plato says that if we could see Virtue in visible form, she would be perfectly beautiful. But then we never can see her. The whole of the moral side of our nature is fretted and vexed, just like the artistic sense, with a perpetual consciousness of failure, of

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shame, of sin. The whole subject is such a source of worry and dissatisfaction that perhaps we think we could do better without any moral sense at all. One recent writer gets quite angry at the mention of sin. The Bible, he says, can do nothing but howl about sin, sin, sin. But this very impatience seems to indicate that he cannot help feeling there is something in it all. So, instead of finding any goal for the moral instinct, we try to smother it altogether. Yet what would you think of an artist who, because he could not attain his ideal, dropped to the lowest form of mechanical work? Instead of obeying conscience we snub it effectively, till at last, like a well-trained servant, it only speaks when it is spoken to. Now, indeed, we will be gay and live a full, an unfettered, a happy life. But in the midst of the feast the laughter sometimes sounds hollow, we know that in the background of consciousness there lurks a terrible sense of deprivation, of loss, of remorse, and for a moment we feel inclined to leave the gay scene and go out once again alone, yet not alone, into the night and the storm. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

Here, then, we have a fact which each one can observe for himself and whose truth he cannot

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deny—that man has much peculiar to himself in his instinctive nature, all of which has this special feature, that it reaches forward to some goal it can apparently never attain, that his being is therefore a puzzle to which external nature affords no key.

Now we say that unless man is in contrast with all other organic beings, unless Nature guides all her lower creatures in the path of satisfaction, while she mocks and deceives man, there must exist somewhere entities, realities, beyond the reach of his senses to which all these thwarted and disappointed instincts are directed, where they seek their full accomplishment and consummation. And those who believe in Christianity maintain that it alone sets the heart at rest and indicates in what alone man finds his satisfaction.

In order to make this perfectly clear, let me quote an illustration which I have given elsewhere.

“Imagine a human being, gifted by birth with all the innate intelligence and emotions of humanity, growing up to manhood in an island, uninhabited both by men and women like himself, and also by the higher animals. Such an one we will suppose is thus, from the dawn of consciousness, entirely alone. . . . Let us con-

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sider briefly in what sort of a mental and material world he would live, and what he would be likely to make of it all.

“To him, as to us, Nature will not seem an altogether unkindly mother. She will give, it may be, no niggardly response to most of his material needs. The sun will shine kindly upon him, and the shade of forest and thicket will give him protection from the heat. The warmth of noonday and the moisture of dew and rain will bid the earth bring forth for him food and refreshment. The draught from the crystal rivulet will quench his thirst. With growth and exercise he will awake to the joy of muscle and sinew, and with glad strength seize upon that supremacy over animate and inanimate nature which is his birthright. Nor will his poetic and artistic taste be altogether starved. By day his eyes will rejoice in light and colour, and by night, as he lies beneath the starlit sky, the murmur of the encompassing ocean will whisper to him unutterable things. So far so good. But if . . . we long and pine for the unattainable, and the joy of our higher thought often loses itself in a moan of pain, how unspeakably darker will be the darkness of his soul! As the social and sympathetic instincts arise in him they will take the expressionless form of

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inarticulate longing, like our own, but infinitely, awfully intensified. His being will yearn and pant after he knows not what, a mystery whose interpretation he cannot fathom, a terrible, sphinx-like riddle to which there is no key, till in the midst of Nature's kindly luxuriance, his broken heart shall wail at her cold bosom and her dry breasts. As boyhood passes into manhood, a new craving, at once the most definite and the most indefinite, will arise—definite because clamant and natural ; indefinite, because he can in no wise imagine to himself what its object may be. What should he know or guess of other beings like himself, of the sympathy of social intercourse, of human companionship and pity, of the glow of love-lit eyes shining into the depths of his own, of the sunshine of baby laughter and baby prattle? . . .

“Now suppose that to this lonely islander there comes, it may be in a dream, some celestial or other visitant, who describes human society as it is, with all its vividness and variety of interest, its romance and its passion. Suppose this visitant, further, to put before him in prospect that if he cross the seemingly illimitable ocean, whose horizon has hitherto shut him in, he may see humanity as it is, not in a glass darkly, but face to face. What will be the

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attitude of our islander towards such a revelation? Will he not rise to embrace it with a wild enthusiasm of assent? This, he will say, is what in my blindness I groped after but could not portray! Yet, is it not too good to be true? For why, if Nature has satisfied all my lower needs, should she scorn my higher longings? . . . This verily I now perceive is the satisfaction of my nature, it is life from the dead! And so, when he awakes, like Jacob of old, from his dream, although to him the gracious forms and glowing colours of external nature are still the same, yet in the light of this new hope, and this clearer significance, how unspeakably are they transfigured and glorified.”<sup>1</sup>

This represents not unfairly the position of our human nature under existing circumstances.

Now, if Christianity satisfies the higher instincts, which otherwise are so blighted with disappointment, then it follows that Christianity must be true. For we are entitled, from all we know of animal life, to conclude that what satisfies a real instinct is itself a reality.

This, then, is the scientific argument depending on observation and reason. This is the rational basis of faith. When the Christian

<sup>1</sup> *Essay on the Relation between Faith and Reason*, p. 48.

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religion is accepted, it clears up all the frustration and disappointment and fret and worry, not indeed by taking them all away at once, but by leading man's nature onward and upward with a progressive consciousness of satisfaction and of peace. And it is irrational on the analogy of all organic life to suppose that man's higher nature is not based on reality. As the instinct is real, the goal too must be real.

But alas ! What is this to you all ye that pass by ? You may say it is all mere words, because you are not persuaded as to the truth of one of the premises—you, at least, have no experience that Christianity satisfies ! Of course you have not, you cannot have, unless you test it for yourselves, unless you come under its influence. And, you say, you cannot do that. I am not so sure of that. So little is asked of you—so little. God is so easily pleased ! Just a little self-surrender, just a little bending of the proud knees, just a little willingness to wait and watch and hope, just a little longing for Him in the darkness of His eclipse—above all, that you should be true to the faith you have—faith in absolute honesty, faith in principle, faith in self-sacrifice—hold these fast and the rest will come. Be faithful over a few things and presently you shall be called to rule over many things. It may



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be that truth will come to you in an unexpected form and at the least likely time. But, "blessed is that servant whom his lord when he cometh shall find watching."

In this connection I would point you to the life of one of the greatest scientists of the nineteenth century. I refer to George J. Romanes. He was the intimate friend of Darwin, Wallace, Huxley, Tyndall, and all the chief scientific giants of the last generation. He had been bred a Christian, but comparatively early in life felt himself forced by intellectual objections to reject Christianity. He wrote anonymously a book entitled *A Candid Examination of Theism*, which attacked the existence of God. It is remarkably indicative of the candour and honesty of the man, that even then he recognized, while adhering straightforwardly to his own view, that he was taking away much of what made life worth living. In the last chapter of the book, after summing up the case for Atheism, he says—

"I am not ashamed to confess that with this virtual negation of God, the universe to me has lost its soul of loveliness; and although from henceforth the precept to 'work while it is day' will doubtless but gain an intensified force from the terribly intensified meaning of the words that 'the night cometh when no man can work,' yet,

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when at times I think, as think at times I must, of the appalling contrast between the hallowed glory of that creed which once was mine, and the lonely mystery of existence as now I find it—at such times I shall ever feel it impossible to avoid the sharpest pang of which my nature is susceptible.”

Thus, the loss of his religion made him unhappy, but he sought above all things to be honest, “he would not make his judgment blind.” Ultimately, after years of darkness, he found his old religion once again, by just such a venture of faith in a small way as I have suggested. While working out his ideas he wrote—

“Try the only experiment available—the experiment of faith. Do the doctrine, and if Christianity be true, verification will come, not indeed mediately through any course of speculation, but immediately by spiritual intuition. Only if a man has faith to make the venture honestly will he be in a just position for deciding the issue. Thus viewed it would seem as ‘if the experiment of faith is not a “fool’s” experiment,’ but, on the contrary, so that there is enough *prima facie* evidence to arrest serious attention, such an experimental trial would seem to be the duty of a pure agnostic.”

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So ultimately his darkness was turned into clear day and he was able to accept the Faith in all its fullness. "More and more there grew on him," says Mrs. Romanes, "a deepening sense of the goodness of God. No one had ever suffered more from the eclipse of faith, no one had ever been more honest in dealing with himself and his difficulties."

But before the final light broke, while still groping doubtfully, he wrote, although no poet, these beautiful lines, which I ask each doubter to take to himself, and with which I shall conclude—

"Amen, now lettest Thou Thy servant, Lord,  
Depart in peace, according to Thy word,  
Although mine eyes may not have fully seen  
Thy great salvation, surely there have been  
Enough of sorrow and enough of sight  
To show the way from darkness into light.  
And Thou hast brought me, through a wilderness of pain,  
To love the sorest paths, if soonest they attain.

As Thou hast found me ready to Thy call,  
Which ordered me to watch the outer wall,  
And, quitting joys and hopes that once were mine,  
To pace with patient step this narrow line,  
Oh ! may it be that, coming soon or late,  
Thou still shalt find Thy soldier at the gate,  
Who then may follow Thee, till sight needs not to prove,  
And faith shall be dissolved in knowledge of Thy love."



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